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LITERARY FABLES,

FROM

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THE SPANISH OF YRIARTE.

BY

ROBERT ROCKLIFF.

SECOND EDITION.



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PREFACE.

DON TOMAS DE YRIARTE, an eminent Spanish poet, died in 1790. His works are voluminous ; but, with the exception, perhaps, of a didactic poem on Music, his *Fabulas Literarias*, of which the first edition appeared in 1782, is the only one of them whose popularity has extended beyond his own country.

With entire originality of subject, these fables combine a novelty of application which distinguishes them from every other collection; for, as

their name implies, they refer solely to literary matters, and, like the *Ars Poetica* of Horace and Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, embody a code of laws expressly framed for the government of authors. In point of execution, they have much of the manner of La Fontaine, but without any thing of the character of imitation.

By the professional critic the following version will probably be censured as too paraphrastic; nor is the Translator unconscious, that in some instances he may have carried his freedom of interpretation to a faulty excess. He thinks, however, with Dryden, that, "if it be a fault, it is much more pardonable than that of those who run into the other extreme of a literal and close translation, where the poet is confined so straightly to his author's words that he wants elbow-room to express his elegancies;" and he trusts that, even where he has deviated the most

largely from the letter, it will be found that he has added nothing which is at variance with the spirit of his original.

One of the distinguishing charms of the *Fabulas Literarias* is the variety of their versification; and in the Spanish preface the attention of the reader is directed with complacency to the fact, that the sixty-seven fables, of which the volume consists, are composed in forty different kinds of metre. In this respect, and almost to an equal extent, the Translator has followed the example of his author; and, instead of monotonously restricting himself, after the usual fashion of English fabulists, to the octosyllabic, has unhesitatingly adopted in each case any form of verse that he considered suitable to the story. If he has seldom attempted to reproduce the metres of the original, it has been from a conviction that many of the peculiarities of Spanish rhythm,

however harmonious they may be to a native ear, would prove harsh and unpleasing to an English one.

It is proper to state that a few of the versions appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* several years ago.

In the present edition the text has been carefully revised, and has undergone considerable alterations. Some additional fables have also been included in the volume, which now, for the first time, contains a translation of Yriarte's entire collection.

LIVERPOOL.

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LITERARY FABLES.

FABLE I.

Ningun particular debe ofenderse de lo que se dice en comun.

THE ELEPHANT AND THE BEASTS.

IN times of old, when beasts, 'tis known,
Possess'd a language of their own,
And even managed, now and then,
To talk as sensibly as men,
It happen'd—for those "good old times"
Were not without their share of crimes—
That, seeing with disapprobation
The vices of the brute creation,

An Elephant resolved to call
A meeting and reform them all.
They met; when, having gravely bow'd
His trunk to greet the curious crowd,
He spouted forth, with mighty strength
Of lungs, a speech of mighty length,
A speech which, like a prudent orator,
He had composed and got *memoriter*.
Each fault and folly, which of late
Had sapp'd the morals of the state;
Pert ignorance, destructive sloth,
Malignant envy, worse than both,
Hypocrisy and affectation,
And pride that oversteps its station,
All these, and more than I have time
To recapitulate in rhyme,
He stigmatized with all the fire
And freedom of a preaching friar.

The virtuous portion of the crew
(But these, alas! were very few)
Received with open acclamation

The honest Elephant's oration.
The gentle lambkin skipp'd with glee,
And blithely humm'd the busy bee;
The faithful dog, the patient steer,
The dove, the emmet, and the deer,
By different tokens of applause
Evinced their zeal in virtue's cause;
The meek ass, with a joyous bray,
Approved the speech; and, strange to say,
The horse assented by a—*nay*.

But others, though they felt within
A shrinking consciousness of sin,
Express'd their anger that the Elephant
Should utter charges so irrelevant.
The tiger gnash'd his teeth and growl'd,
The wolf in savage concert howl'd;
The serpent shot his venom'd fang,
And hiss'd throughout the long harangue;
So *foul* a libel on a bird
The vulture vow'd was never heard;
The toad refused to stay—the snail

And locust follow'd in his trail;
And reynard fled, as if a pack
Of dogs were yelping at his back;
The monkey, mounting at a jump
Upon the dromedary's hump,
Amused the groundlings with grimace,
And mock'd the speaker to his face;
While gnat and hornet, wasp and drone,
Reviled him in an under-tone.

But high above the jarring host
The Elephant maintain'd his post,
As unconcern'd as if the brutes
Had been a company of mutes,
And thus, with unabated force,
At length concluded his discourse:—
“My observations, I protest,
However pointedly express'd,
Were universally address'd—
Address'd alike to every one,
But personally aim'd at none.
The few whose consciences are clear

Have nothing to resent or fear ;
While such as choose to take offence
By misinterpreting my sense,
Convict themselves, and merely show
How justly they deserve the blow.”

My fables, in their application,
Refer to every age and nation ;
For authors, just as dull and vain
As any who abound in Spain,
Have perpetrated prose and rhyme
In every land, in every time.
But, though I solemnly disclaim
All personality of aim,
If any scribbler, conscience-smitten,
Should wince at aught that I have written—
Should find, in short, the cap to fit,
The fool is welcome unto it.

FABLE II.

Se ha de considerar la calidad de la obra, y no el tiempo que se ha tardado en hacerla.

THE SILKWORM AND THE SPIDER.

ONE day as a Silkworm slowly spun
 Her delicate threads in the noontide sun,
 A Spider cried from his darksome nook :
 "Look at my web, sweet sister, look !
 I began it at dawn—'tis hardly noon—
 And yet my task will be ended soon ;
 For while thou spinnest thy life away,
 I weave a web in a single day.
 Examine it well—each airy line
 Is as fine and fair as the best of thine."
 "True," said the Silkworm with a smile ;
 "But will they endure for half the while?"

FABLE III.

Nunca una obra se acredita tanto de mala como quando la aplauden los necios.

THE BEAR, THE APE, AND THE PIG.

A BEAR, whose dancing help'd to gain
 His own and owner's livelihood,
 And whose success had made him vain
 As any petit-maitre, stood
 Upon his hinder legs to try
 The figure of a new quadrille,
 When seeing that an Ape was nigh,
 He stump'd about with all his skill.
 And "Tell me how you like," he cried,
 "My dancing, for I'm always glad
 To hear the truth."—The Ape replied,
 "I really think it very bad."—

“’Tis plain enough,” rejoin’d the Bear,

“That envy makes you censure so ;

For have I not a graceful air,

A slender shape and limber toe ?”

But here a tasteless Pig began

To grunt applause, and said, “I vow
I’ve never met, in brute or man,

With one who danced so well as thou.”

The Bear, on hearing this, became

Sedate and pensive for awhile ;

And then, as if abash’d with shame,

Replied in a more humble style :

“The agile Ape’s rebuke might be,

Inspired by jealousy or spleen ;

But, since the Pig commends, I see

How bad my dancing must have been.”

Let every author think on this,

And hold the maxim for a rule—

The worst that can befall him is

The approbation of a fool.

FABLE IV.

Fácilmente se luce con citar y elogiar á los hombres grandes de la antigüedad :
el mérito está en imitarlos.

THE BEE AND THE DRONES.

A COUNCIL of the Drones was call'd one day
On special business—to devise a way
By which they might, if possible, achieve
A better character, and undeceive
The public, who unluckily agreed
To stigmatize them as a worthless breed.
They met—the idlest idiot of them all
Came, like a patriot, at his country's call.
And first they tried, with all their might and main,
To make a honeycomb, but tried in vain ;
For, simple as it seemed, the task defied
Their efforts, and was quickly laid aside.

But, still desirous to display their parts
And application to the useful arts,
They went, and, taking from an ancient hive
The body of a Bee, who, when alive,
Had been the ablest artist of her day,
They bore it to a grave in long array,
And buried it with honour; then, around
The spot they flew, and with a humming sound
Extoll'd the honey which she once had made,
And sang her praises with as much parade,
As if the panegyric could atone
For lack of equal merit in a Drone,
Or made, in fact, her merit all their own.

While thus they pour'd their eulogistic strain,
And as they sung the more became more vain,
A Bee, who heard them as he flew along
In quest of flowers, address'd the noisy throng:
“You toil to little purpose, if the sum
And substance of your toil is but a hum.
The smallest product of a working bee—
A single drop of honey made by me,

Exceeds in worth your utmost pomp of praise,
And all the buzz and bustle that you raise.”

And thus, by quoting works unlike his own,
A pedant's dulness is more plainly shown;
For while the booby, as he fills his page
With classic extracts, deems himself a sage,
The scraps of foreign wisdom which he cites
Expose the native nonsense that he writes;
But authors of superior parts, instead
Of idly rhapsodising o'er the dead,
Evince a proper sense of ancient lore,
And praise it less, but imitate it more.

FABLE V.

Los que corrompen su idioma no tienen otro desquite que llamar *Puristas* á los que le hablan con propiedad, como si el serlo fuera tacha.

THE PARROTS AND THE MONKEY.

Two Parrots, fresh from St. Domingo,
 Where each had learn'd a different lingo—
 For half that isle of sugar-cane
 Belongs to France, and half to Spain—
 A captain's gift to his Amanda,
 Were caged within the same veranda,
 And blending, as they gabbled on,
 Their French and Spanish into one,
 Produced a dialect betwixt
 The two, in which the two were mix'd—
 A dialect that served to tell
 Their parrot-news in, just as well

As if it had consisted wholly
Of French or Spanish phrases solely.

But, vex'd to hear the birds harangue
In such an incoherent slang,
A mess of words whose misalliance
Set sense and syntax at defiance,
And might be (for they sounded oddly)
Indelicate, if not ungodly,
Their mistress, in the hope that each,
When placed beyond the other's reach,
Would soon resume his native speech,
Removed the more loquacious parrot—
The French one—to a distant garret.
But though the Gallic bird improved,
And, ere he had been long removed,
Abandoning as *incommode*
A tongue *qui n'était point de mode*,
From his discourse contrived to banish
Completely every scrap of Spanish,
The Spanish bird would not retrench
A single syllable of French,

But still continued, though alone,
To jabber it, as if its tone
Enrich'd the old Castilian tongue—
As gardens are enrich'd by dung.

One day, instead of *olla*, he
Call'd for *un gratin de bouillie*,
When, with a face of much amazement
Protruded from a neighbouring casement,
A Monkey ask'd him what the phrase meant;
And, being told, discharged a volley
Of laughter at the pedant's folly.
Surprised and vex'd at this rebuff,
The Parrot answer'd in a huff:
"Thou art a *Purist*,* I suspect,
And I despise thy sober sect."
The Monkey, bowing to the bird,
Replied: "I thank thee for the word;
Though parrots may despise the same,
It is an honourable name."

* A term employed by modern corrupters of our language, when they pretend to ridicule those who speak it with purity."—YRIARTE.

Too many authors intersperse
Affectedly their prose or verse
With Gallicisms that defile
Their native purity of style,
And, like the Parrot, labour thus
To be, at best, ridiculous.

FABLE VI.

Sin claridad no hay obra buena.

THE APE AND THE JUGGLER.

Good Doctor Dunderhead, who lost his brains
By overstudying of natural history—
For students often take uncommon pains
To turn the plainest matter to a mystery—
Who wrote a score of volumes to describe
Some score of beasts that Adam never saw,
Of phoenix, unicorn, or griffin tribe,
And gave their very likeness to a claw;
In short, who rummaged continent and cape
For creatures of the strangest size and shape,
This reverend writer tells in ponderous prose
A certain story, which I'll re-compose
In light and careless verse, about an Ape.

According to his kind, this Ape possess'd
The faculty of imitation strongly,
(A faculty that's dangerous at the best,
For apes are apt, like men, to use it wrongly,)
And being bound apprentice—by a chain—
Unto a Juggler, had contrived to gain
A smattering of a trick or two, which made
The creature as inordinately vain
As if he were an adept in the trade,
And competent, in case of need—if age
Or sickness laid his master on the shelf—
To take his place at once upon the stage,
And carry on the business by himself.
So one day, when the Juggler chanced to be
From home, he seized the opportunity
To get up a performance of his own ;
And, summoning his friends by beat of drum,
Invited all the neighbouring beasts to come,
And see how great a conjurer he had grown.

They came—and first the mimic Ape essay'd
The part of harlequin, in which he play'd

Such *striking* tricks with his elastic wand,
Such sudden transformations, that he made
The shaggy hair of the spectators stand
On end in wonder, and their eyes expand.
A figuranté next, with nodding plume,
Upon a rope that stretch'd across the room,
He danced, unto the music of a pair
Of castanets, along its slender length,
Then headlong cast himself with all his strength,
And swung suspended by his tail in air—
A sight at which his friends were so much awed,
They hardly had the courage to applaud.
In short, as juggler, mountebank, or mime,
His style of acting was pronounced sublime;
And even when he made, by sleight of hand,
The cards to come and vanish at command,
You would have sworn, if you had seen the trick,
That he had *dealt* directly with Old Nick.

At length the Ape, ambitious to complete
His triumph, undertook the crowning feat—
His master's masterpiece—which so surpass'd

The others, that the Juggler, as a treat,
On all occasions kept it till the last.
A sheet was hung between his friends and him,
The lights extinguish'd and the room made dim ;
When, after a confused preamble, which
Awoke attention to the highest pitch,
He took a magic lantern from its case,
And, drawing through the groove each pictured glass,
With an exceeding gravity of face
Announced the different figures that should pass.
“ Here comes a king,” he cried, “ and there a queen,”
But not a glimpse of either could be seen ;
“ Now stately towers,” “ now ships upon the main,”
But still the keenest optics stared in vain.
No mystic ring expanded in the gloom,
No spectral image glided through the room ;
But all was darkness—king, queen, towers and ships
All hidden, like the sun in an eclipse.
The crowd became impatient, and the Ape
Had well nigh got into a serious scrape ;
For, seeing not the sights of which he spoke,
And thinking the deception past a joke,

His friends, unable to suppress their rage,
At length began to hoot him from the stage.
But, in the very thickest of the din,
The Juggler unexpectedly came in,
And instantly detecting the omission
That caused the failure of the exhibition,

Rebuked his pupil with a smile, and cried :
“ No wonder that the audience are benighted,
And all thy boasted visions undescried !
The lamp within the lantern is not lighted ;
And thou, poor pug, art properly requited.”

Thus, might I drop into an author's ear

A piece of counsel, I would say : “ Be sure,
Whate'er you write, to keep your meaning clear ;
For dulness only ever is obscure.”

FABLE VII.

Con hablar poco y gravemente logran muchos opinion de hombres grandes.

THE BIG BELL AND THE LITTLE BELL.

WITHIN an old cathedral hung
 A mighty bell,
 Which never, save at Easter, swung
 One solemn knell;
 And then, so sternly all around
 Its echoes fell,
 The peasants trembled at the sound
 Of that big bell.

Not far from the cathedral stood
 A hermit's cell,
 And in its belfry-tower of wood
 A little bell;

Whose daily tinklings through the year
So faintly fell,
The peasants hardly gave an ear
To that small bell.

The hermit—he who own'd the same,
And loved it well—
Resolved that it should share the fame
Of the big bell ;
So tolling it but once a year
With one brief knell,
He taught the peasants to revere
His little bell.

And there are fools in vast repute,
Who, strange to tell,
Acquire their fame by being mute
Like that small bell ;
These would-be sages rarely speak,
For they know well
That frequent utterance would break
The solemn spell.

FABLE VIII.

Sin reglas del arte, el que en algo acierta, acierta por casualidad.

THE MUSICAL ASS.

THE fable which I now present,
 Occurr'd to me by accident ;
 And whether bad or excellent,
 Is merely so by accident.

A stupid Ass this morning went
 Into a field by accident,
 And cropp'd his food and was content,
 Until he spied by accident
 A flute, which some oblivious gent
 Had left behind by accident ;

When, sniffing it with eager scent,
He breathed on it by accident,
And made the hollow instrument
Emit a sound by accident.

“Hurrah, hurrah,” exclaim’d the brute,
“How cleverly I play the flute!”

A fool, in spite of nature’s bent,
May shine for once—by accident.

FABLE IX.

Nadie pretenda ser tenido por Autor sólo con poner un ligero prólogo,
ó algunas notas á libro ajeno.

THE IVY AND THE THYME.

I'VE read—I know not where or when, or if in prose
or rhyme—

A dialogue that pass'd between the Ivy and the
Thyme.

The Ivy, bowing haughtily, like one of high degree,
Began : “ God help thee, little one, how much I
pity thee !

For, though the sweetest of the herbs that scent
the air around,

Thou art a dwarf in stature, scarce a span above
the ground.”

“I own my insignificance,” the humble Thyme
replied ;

“But still, my stately friend, I think thy pity
misapplied.

I rather ought to pity thee, for I, however small,
Am not indebted for my growth, like thee, unto a
wall ;

Whilst thou, if sever'd from the stones to which
thy fibres grow,

Wouldst trail and grovel on the ground,—the lowest
of the low.”

Thus many a scholiast contrives to climb the steep
of fame,

By linking to some lofty work his else unnoticed
name ;

For, though his scholia may deface the text o'er
which they crawl,

They grow incorporate with it, like Ivy with the
wall.

FABLE X.

No debemos detenernos en cuestiones frívolas, olvidando el asunto principal.

THE TWO RABBITS.

WITH a ravenous pack of dogs at his back,
 A Rabbit fled—or flew;
 For his course was as fleet as if his four feet
 Were wing'd, like Mercury's two.

Away, away, in wild dismay,
 He flew with all his might;
 And his joy was vast, when he reach'd at last
 A warren in his flight.

But ere he stole into a hole,
 Secure from further fear,
 A comrade, who spied the trembler, cried,
 “What is amiss, my dear?”

.

“What is amiss! why, simply this,”

He replied with panting breath,

“Those greyhounds, see, have been hunting me,
Till I’m nearly run to death.”—

“I hear the yell, and know it well,

Of the dogs upon your track ;

But you really err, for there’s not, good sir,
A greyhound in the pack.”—

“Not a greyhound ?”—“No! the fact is so,
As you may shortly see ;

And how you could make so absurd a mistake,
Is a mystery to me.

“For the noisy crew will be soon in view,

I hear them hurrying on ;

And if you’ll stay, you’ll find that they
Are beagles, every one.”—

“What! beagles? Pshaw! the dogs that I saw
Were greyhounds, I’ll be bail ;

I am not blind, I know what kind
Of dogs were at my tail.”—

“ Unless your fright deceived your sight,
You must be blind indeed ;
Or with half an eye, and the pack so nigh,
You might have known the breed.

“ They are all, in short, of the beagle sort,
Whate’er you may think or say.”—

“ I tell you, zounds, that I know greyhounds,
And such, as I live, are they.”—

While words ran high, the dogs drew nigh
And nigher in pursuit,
Till unaware they fell on the pair,
And settled the dispute.

Some authors discuss a question thus,
And, like this foolish pair,
Expend their life in wordy strife
On trifles light as air.

FABLE XI.

No falta quien quiera pasar por Autor original, quando no hace mas que repetir con corta diferencia lo que otros muchos han dicho.

THE EGGS.

THERE is an island, which perhaps
 May not be mention'd in the maps,
 It is so very little ;
 But Mendes Pinto* could, no doubt,
 If question'd of its "whereabout,"
 Describe it to a tittle.

This island, by some strange neglect
 Of fortune, (though in one respect
 The goddess had been gracious,

* Fernam Mendes Pinto, a traveller famous for his want of veracity. Many of his descriptions of the places which he professes to have visited, are altogether imaginary.

And bless'd it with a breed of owls)
Was wholly destitute of fowls—.

I mean the gallinaceous.

Nor could an egg, however much
An epicure had sigh'd for such,
 Be had for love or pence there,
Till, tempest-driven from his way,
A captain touch'd at it one day,
 And left some cocks and hens there.

No more confined within a coop,
But fluttering forth all cock-a-hoop,
 The fowls, on reaching dry land,
Began without delay to pair,
And eggs, of course, no longer were
 Unknown throughout the island.

The natives found them newly laid ;
And though at first they felt afraid
 To taste the strange production,

Ere long a good old grandame crack'd
A shell, and managed to extract
The yolk by simple suction.

When, imitating what they saw,
And seizing them uncook'd and raw,
They suck'd the eggs with pleasure,
Pronounced their granny wondrous wise,
And thought they ne'er enough could prize
The gastronomic treasure.

But when, in course of time, a man
Contrived to boil an egg, the plan
Was deem'd a vast improvement ;
The dame discarded and despised—
They bless'd the genius that devised
This culinary movement.

And when a further scheme was broach'd,
And eggs were delicately poach'd,
The public, still more grateful,

Exclaim'd that these were eggs indeed ;
And raw or boil'd, they now agreed,
Were absolutely hateful.

But ere another month had gone,
An egg was fried ; and every one
So much approved the flavour,
The dish became a favourite, till
A fashion more luxurious still
Supplanted it in favour.

For when within a crust of paste,
And spiced and sweeten'd to the taste,
The custard was presented,
The gift was welcomed with delight,
And blessings lavish'd on the wight
By whom it was invented.

But butter'd eggs succeeded soon,
A still more appetising boon,
Which all pronounced delicious,

A rare receipt—a happy hit—
A master-piece of cookery, fit
To set before Apicius.

Yet though, successful for a while,
Its fame extended through the isle,
And spread from hall to hovel,
Ere long the public loathed the dish,
'Twas superseded, and a wish
Was felt for something novel.

So when, one lucky Shrovetide hour,
An artiste mix'd with milk and flour,
His eggs into a batter,
From house to house the fashion ran,
And cakes were toss'd in every pan,
And smoked on every platter.

At once the daring fancy, which
Had soar'd to so sublime a pitch
Of esculent invention,

Was praised by all ; and many thought
The author of the pancake ought
To have a public pension.

But innovation egg'd them on—
The pancake ceased to please anon,
And every roof resounded
With pæans loud and louder still,
When, by a further feat of skill,
The omlet was compounded.

In short, a hundred different schemes,
Whips, trifles, syllabubs and creams,
As fickle fancy goaded,
Prevail'd in turn throughout the isle,
Were each applauded for a while,
And each in turn exploded.

Till, vex'd to find that every change,
Howe'er preposterous and strange,
Was hail'd with acclamation,

A sage, reverting to the past
With fond remembrance, thus at last
Address'd the noisy nation.

“Though cooks deserve our thanks,” he cried,
“And eggs, it cannot be denied,
Are better for the dressing,
The man who brought unto our coast
The cocks and hens, methinks, is most
Entitled to a blessing.”

So they who teach their fellow-men
Some useful truth unknown till then,
Deserve far greater praises
Than they, whose utmost end and aim
Is merely to repeat the same
In other forms and phrases.

FABLE XII.

Mas vale saber una cosa bien, que muchas mal.

THE GOOSE AND THE SERPENT.

ONE day a Goose, that stood beside
 A shallow river, pertly cried :
 “ Look where I will, I never see
 A creature that can vie with me.
 What wondrous powers are mine ! Endow’d
 More amply than the common crowd,
 And not, like them, ignobly pent
 Within a single element,
 I rove where’er I list, the free
 And charter’d denizen of three ;
 For having under my command
 The realms of water, air and land,

I traverse all, and run or swim
Or fly, according to my whim."

A Serpent, that was creeping by,
Rebuked the creature's braggart cry :
"Canst thou," said he, "conceited thing,
Outstrip the Eagle on the wing,
O'ertake the Stag upon the turf,
Or match the Salmon in the surf ?
No ! Wouldst thou but one instant try
With such to swim or run or fly,
The strife would prove how much thou art
A bungler in each different part."

So authors often estimate
Their talents at too high a rate ;
For, barely qualified to shine,
Perhaps, in some inferior line,
They aim at all, instead of one,
And, like the Goose, excel in none.

FABLE XIII.

Tambien suele ser nulidad el no saber mas que una cosa: extremo opuesto del defecto reprehendido en la fábula antecedente.

THE PARASOL, THE MUFF, AND THE FAN.

ALTHOUGH the man who makes pretension
 To universal comprehension,
 Who turns by fits and starts to all things,
 And equally to great and small things,
 At most will merely learn to smatter
 Imperfectly on any matter—
 Yet he who limits his ambition
 Unto one trifling acquisition,
 Is certainly as great a zany
 As if he aim'd at over-many.

One day, reposing from his labours,
 A Parasol address'd his neighbours,

A hairy Muff and airy Fan, too,
 That lay within the same portmanteau ;
 For still, as in the days of Æsop,
 When Pot and Kettle kick'd a breeze up,
 E'en things inanimate are able
 To talk familiarly in fable.
 "I scorn," said he, "to be abusive,
 But really you are too exclusive,
 For, though endow'd with some ability,
 You lack the gift of versatility ;
 And hence, while *I* am—like a wooer—
 At any moment welcome to her,
 Howe'er she may at times regard you,
 The fair one will ere long discard you.
 The Muff, for instance, may be chosen
 In winter, when her hands are frozen,
 But, as the season waxes warmer,
 It loses all its power to charm her ;
 And when the sultry suns of August,
 Have set her longing for a raw gust,
 The Fan is fondly press'd to serve her
 And cool her panting bosom's fervour,

Though, when December chills the weather,
She banishes it altogether.

Thus, each alternately selected,
Is sure in turn to be rejected.

But I, through every change of season,
Am cherish'd for a double reason ;

A *Parasol* when summer melts her,
A *Parapluie** when winter pelts her,
In sun or shower I'm still on duty,
The constant body-guard of beauty."

* In place of the English word *umbrella*, its French equivalent *parapluie* has been adopted in order to preserve in the translation a similar play of words to that which exists in the original :—

Aprended de mí, pese á vos ;
Que en el hibierno soi Para-aguas,
Y en el verano Quitasol.

FABLE XIV.

Algunos sólo aprecian la Literatura extranjera, y no tienen la menor noticia de la de su Nacion.

THE CHEST OF TEA AND THE CHEST OF SAGE.

ONE morning, as they chanced to meet at sea,
A chest of Sage address'd a chest of Tea :

“ Ho ! brother, whence and whither art thou
sailing ?”

And in a speech emitted, or express'd—
As speeches ever must be—from the *chest*,

The Tea return'd an answer to the hailing :—
“ I'm journeying from the east unto the west,
From China unto Europe's distant land,
Where I'm an article in high demand.”

“ And I,” rejoin'd the Sage, “unlike to thee,
Am from the west, and sailing eastwardly

To China, where for wholesomeness and flavour,
As food or physic, I'm in mighty favour.*

For though my countrymen, I blush to say,

My European countrymen despise
And fling me as a worthless weed away,

The China-man is, heaven be praised! more wise—
He has a sage-tooth in his head, and knows
The pleasure and relief my leaf bestows.
In fact, I take precedence over thee,
And hit his taste, friend Tea, unto a T.

“But fare thee well! and speed thee with the gale
To Europe, where the tables will be turn'd,
Where young and old will hail thee and inhale,
And thou wilt be adored as I was spurn'd;
For every nation, howsoever loth
To praise an article of native growth,
Is prompt enough to purchase and applaud
Whatever comes unto it from abroad.”

* Les Chinois font plus de cas de la *sauge* que de leur meilleur thé. Savary rapporte que l'on disoit de son tems, que les Hollandois, qui leur en portoient en quantité de toute sechée, en recevoient en échange *quatre livres* de thé pour *une* de sauge.—*Encyclopédie Méthodique*. Paris, 1784.

And thus—although I grant that general good
Results from commerce rightly understood,
And that the intercourse of mind with mind,
Like other commerce, should be unconfined—
I blame the man whose scholarship is shown
In every country's authors save his own,
Who prizes, if from Paris or from Rome,
The very talent that he scorns at home,
And, while he overrates Racine or Tasso,
Disdains to read a line of Garcilasso.*

* Garcilasso de la Vega, one of the most celebrated poets of Spain. An elegant translation of his works into English verse has appeared from the pen of Mr. Wiffen.

FABLE XV.

¡ Qué despreciable es la Poesía de mucha hojarasca.

THE FROG AND THE FROGLING.

FROM their dwelling in a bog,
 Cried a Frogling to a Frog :
 “ Mother, see, on yonder banks
 How the canes, in crowded ranks,
 Lift their leafy heads on high
 Till they seem to touch the sky.
 Tell me, have you ever seen
 Any trees so tall and green—
 Any that in stalk or stem
 Would deserve to vie with them ?”
 But the words had scarcely past,
 When an unexpected blast

Rush'd, and with a mighty *blow*
Struck the grove and laid it low.
Then, retorting from the bog,
To the Frogling cried the Frog :
“ Look, my child—a child may gain
Wisdom even from a cane—
Look, and learn no more to prize
Objects for their gloss and size.
For each trunk that seem'd to thee
Massy as a forest tree,
Is as empty, frail and thin,
As the vilest reed, within.”

Many bardlings in a strain
Just as fugitive and vain—
Never terse and never strong,
But inordinately long,
And, despite of much pretence,
Quite without the sap of sense—
Flourish for a day, and then
Vanish from the eyes of men.

FABLE XVI.

Nada sirve la fama, si no corresponden las obras.

THE SWAN AND THE LINNET.

As once a Linnet on a tree
 Was piping like a lover's lute,
 A Swan exclaim'd : " All birds should be,
 When I am nigh, entranced and mute ;
 For none can hope to vie with me,
 A vocalist of such repute !

" It heeds me not, but warbles still—
 Was ever songster half so vain ?
 The creature, with its tiresome trill,
 May thank its stars that I disdain

To open my melodious bill,
And pour an overpowering strain.

“For if, as poets truly tell,
My very death-notes are divine,
My voice, of course, when I am well,
Is still more exquisitely fine ;
And I could readily excel
That simple song by one of mine.”

“I grant thy fame in former years,”
The Linnet answer’d ; “but, as thou
Art never heard by modern ears,
Thy song is deem’d a fiction now,
And, like the music of the spheres,
A tale which moderns disallow.

“But give me, sweet one, I beseech.
A sample of that olden lay.”
The Swan, too flatter’d by the speech
To answer with a churlish nay,

Began to sing—but gave a screech ;
The Linnet laugh'd, and flew away.

Thus many a coxcomb, with a name
For talents which he ne'er possess'd,
On turning author, finds his fame
Unequal to the trying test,
And, like the Swan, exposed to shame,
Becomes a byword and a jest.

FABLE XVII.

Los que empiezan elevando el estilo, se ven tal vez precisados á humillarle despues demasiado.

THE TRAVELLER AND THE MULE.

FRESH from a feed of oats and hay,
 A Mule, that had been let for hire,
 Started as briskly on its way
 As if its limbs would never tire ;
 But, having in a little while
 Expended all its feeble fire,
 Began to slacken in its style,
 And, fairly halting ere it got
 A rood beyond the second mile,
 Refused to stir another jot,
 But stuck as fast as if it were
 A part and parcel of the spot,

And, like a rock, stood rooted there.
Suspecting this to be a trick,
A sort of mulish *ruse-de-guerre*,
The rider plied both spur and stick,
But both appliances were vain,
And each replied to by a kick ;
Till, rearing in its rage and pain,
At length it flung him from its back
And laid him sprawling on the plain.

“ Art thou, in sooth, thou scurvy hack,”
The wounded rider cried, “ the same
That sped at first upon thy track,
As if endued with strength of frame
And speed of limb that might defy
The power of man to tire or tame ?
The glanders choke thee ! and may I
Encounter a severer fate,
And on the spot ignobly die,
The victim of a broken pate,
If knowingly I mount again
A brute that starts at such a rate.”

The youthful bard may try in vain
The path of poesy, unless,
Instead of urging, he restrain
His winged courser's eagerness ;
For Pegasus, if ridden hard,
Will sink at last from sheer excess,
And fling to earth the luckless bard.

FABLE XVIII.

Hai malos Escritores que se lisonjéan fácilmente de lograr fama póstuma,
quando no han podido merecerla en vida.

THE GOAT AND THE HORSE.

A GOAT, with feet that danced and head that sway'd
In modulated measure to the sound
Of a sweet violin, which, deftly play'd,
Awoke the blandest echoes all around,
Had listen'd long, when, with an air of pride,
He thus address'd a Horse who stood beside:—

“These chords that speak so well, my humble friend,
Were borrow'd from the bowels of a goat;
And even I, when life is at an end,
May still survive, and be a thing of *note*;
For then some artist of harmonic skill
Shall twist my tripe into as sweet a trill.”

The Horse, as if in laughter, neigh'd aloud,
And answer'd thus: "Poor wretch! of what avail
Would be the simple chords which make thee proud,
Unless I had supplied them from my tail
With many a hair to form the fiddle-bow,
Whose movement makes the hidden music flow?"

"And, though the loss may pain me, I'm content;
For, after all, it gladdens me to see,
While I am still alive, the instrument
Indebted for its harmony to me.
But say, what pleasure can its accents give
To solace thee when thou hast ceased to live?"

Thus many a wretched writer, who has tried
With unsuccessful efforts to engage
Cotemporary praise, appeals with pride
Unto the judgment of a future age,
As if posterity's approving breath
Could gratify "the dull cold ear of death."

FABLE XIX.

La variedad es requisito indispensable en las obras de gusto.

THE BEE AND THE CUCKOO.

“THOU babbler,” cried a Bee, one day,
 Unto a Cuckoo, “prithee, cease!
 I hate thy everlasting lay;
 Begone, and let me work in peace.

“To hear thee syllable* so long,
 With such monotony, the word,
 The single word that is thy song,
 Exhausts my patience, foolish bird.”

* — airy tongues, that syllable men’s names
 On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.—*Comus*.

“ Well, if my song be wearisome,”

Replied the Cuckoo to the Bee,

“ The structure of thy honeycomb

Seems just as much in fault to me.

“ Its endless hexagons display

No effort of inventive skill ;

Then, shape it in some other way,

And I will try a newer trill.”

“ Our cases differ,” said the Bee,

“ My honeycomb needs no excuse ;

The strictest uniformity

Is excellent in works of use.

“ But works of taste, my friend, like thine,

Should take, of course, a wider range ;

For pleasure is their chief design,

And pleasure’s essence lies in change.”

FABLE XX.

Alguno que ha alabado una obra ignorando quien es su Autor, suele
vituperarla despues que lo sabe.

THE MOUSE AND THE CAT.

WHAT modern fables can compare with those
Of Æsop, whose sublime invention chose
The noblest incidents for each, and then
Express'd them in inimitable prose !

Well, since I want a subject for my pen,
And have his book at hand, I'll even choose
A fable from him, and request the Muse
To hitch it into good Castilian rhymes ;
For I am sure that, merely for its merit,
The tasteful reader will at once prefer it
To any apologue of modern times.

A Mouse one evening, as it stole
In quest of plunder from its hole,
Exclaim'd aloud—for mice could speak
Of yore, though now they merely squeak,—
“What virtue is more lovely than
Fidelity in brute or man ?
The dog, who guards his master's store,
And drives the robber from the door,
Deserves the praise of every mouse
That has an interest in the house !”
A Cat rejoin'd : “Thy praise should be
Bestow'd as readily on me ;
For, like the dog, and with a zeal
As watchful for my master's weal,
Throughout the night I keep aloof
A host of robbers from his roof,
And guard from thee and thine the hoard
Of dainties that should crown his board.”
On this the Mouse withdrew again
Into its hole, and answer'd then :
“Henceforth, since *thou* art faithful, mice
Shall call fidelity a vice.”

'Tis ever thus—for we commend
The smallest virtue in a friend ;
While in a foe we should abhor it,
And damn the hateful fellow for it.

What think you, honest reader ? Is not this
A clever little fable ? “ Oh ! divine !

'Tis quite in Æsop's style, and only his ;

You see his mighty mind in every line.”

Nay, courteous reader, spare your praise awhile ;

The fable is, in fact, my own, and written
Precisely in my customary style.

“ The deuce it is ! then I am fairly bitten.”

And, dear discerning reader, now that I

Have own'd it, and you know it to be mine,
Your better judgment will, of course, decry

The trifle which at first you deem'd so fine.

FABLE XXI.

Hai Correctores de obras ajenas, que añaden mas errores de los que corrigén.

THE HOUSEMAID AND THE BROOM.

“THE devil take this besom,” cried
 A Housemaid to the stump of broom,
 An ancient stump, with which she tried
 In vain to sweep a dirty room ;
 For, dropping piecemeal on the floor,
 It only litter’d it the more.

And so say I—The devil take
 Those critics of a classic text,
 Whose commentaries merely make
 A crabbed passage more perplex’d,
 And, by their efforts to correct,
 But aggravate each old defect.

FABLES XXII & XXIII.

Atreverse á los Autores muertos, y no á los vivos, no sólo es cobardia,
sinó traicion.

XXII.—THE OWL ;

AND

XXIII.—THE DOG AND THE RAGMAN.

SOME critics, of the coward sort,
With mute servility succumb
To living authors ; for, in short,
The risk, the fear of a retort
Compels them to be dumb.

But, like the gouls of eastern lore,
These critics batten on the dead ;
And when each author is no more,
To whom they meanly quail'd of yore,
Attack him without dread.

A story, which in other days
I often heard my grandam tell—
So often that her rambling phrase
Is printed on my mind—pourtrays
This kind of critics well.

An Owl, one morn—but, sooth to say,
I am not telling it aright ;
For owls are birds that love to stay
Within their secret homes by day,
And only fly by night—

An Owl one night profanely flew
Into a church, and chanced to see
A lamp or lantern ; but the two
Are much alike, and one will do,
Whichever it might be.

And yet, methinks, anent the pair,
It was, if I remember well,
A lamp ; but whether round or square,
Or made of glass or earthenware,
Is more than I can tell.

But there it hung, in pious proof
Of catholicity, before
The Virgin's shrine—a thing aloof,
Just ninety feet below the roof,
And nine above the floor.

The Owl, who felt at such a sight
His appetite for oil arise,
Swoop'd boldly towards it ; but the light,
Alack ! was too intensely bright,
And scorch'd his lidless eyes.

So, reeling backwards in despair,
He mutter'd, as he left the shrine,
“ Oh ! but for this terrific glare,
How gloriously would I fare
Upon that oil of thine !

“ But trust me, lamp, though now I flee,
If ever I should chance to find
Thy flame extinct—with fearless glee
I'll glut my thirsty beak in thee,
Nor leave a drop behind.”

And such are critics. But if they
Should feel dissatisfied with this,
Perhaps another fable may
Present their likeness in a way
That none can take amiss.

One day a Ragman with his stick
Was poking in the kennel, when
A Dog that pass'd began to prick
His ears—for dogs delight to pick
A quarrel with such men—

And rushing headlong to the fray,
With bark and bite attack'd the man;
The frighten'd vagrant flung away
His stick, or, as himself would say,
He cut his stick, and ran.

The Dog pursued him as he fled;
And "What a wretch is this," he cried,
"Who holds a living dog in dread,
Yet, when he meets with one that's dead,
Will strip it of its hide!"

FABLE XXIV.

Conviene estudiar los Autores originales, nó los Copiantes y malos Traductores.

THE PARROT, THE STARLING AND THE MAGPIE.

A STARLING, in a sudden freak,
 Resolved that she would learn to speak,
 But, acting on a foolish plan,
 Selected, in the place of man,
 A Parrot as the fittest creature
 For a preparatory teacher,
 From whom she quickly learn'd to prate
 Some dozen phrases, which at random
 She managed to articulate,
 Although she could not understand 'em;
 When thinking mere articulation
 Identical with conversation,

She left him, ere a month had flown,
 And took a pupil of her own,
 A Magpie, with as little sense,
 Or faculty of eloquence,
 On whom she proffer'd to bestow
 Such lessons, as, if duly heeded,
 Would teach it, in a week or so,
 To talk as cleverly as *she* did.

The reader may infer that such
 A pupil would from such tuition
 Be likely to derive as much
 Intelligence and erudition,
 As certain students who, instead
 Of studying at the fountain-head
 The literature of foreign nations,
 A less laborious mode pursue,
 And scantily imbibe it through
 The imperfect channel of translations.

FABLE XXV.

Mui ridículo papel hacen los Plagiarios que escriben centones.

THE BUSTARD.

A BUSTARD, mortified to see
 Her offspring fly so sluggishly,
 Resolved to rear a brisker race,
 A brood of bastards, in their place—
 So from the sparrow and the thrush
 That lodged within a neighbouring bush,
 From partridge and from lark that made
 Their dwelling in the grassy glade,
 Where'er a nest was in her reach,
 She went, and stole an egg from each ;

Then on the ill-assorted batch
Sate resolutely down to hatch.

Some eggs proved addle—but the bird
Maintain'd her post, and never stirr'd
Till, after many a day had past,
A few grew animate at last,
And from their shells a callow brood
Put forth their heads and chirped for food,
Not two of whom were like each other,
But all unlike their foster-mother.

The Bustard bless'd the motley sight,
And scream'd so loudly with delight,
That, waken'd by the sudden sound,
Her wondering neighbours flock'd around;
But when they look'd into the nest,
And saw the squabs that she caress'd,
The various plumage, shape and size,
Apparent to a parent's eyes,
At once reveal'd to every one
The secret how their eggs had gone;

And, fired with sudden courage, they
Attack'd in turn the bird of prey,
And seizing each upon its own
Flew off, and left her quite alone.

Thus many a scribe who lacks the skill
To ply successfully the quill,
Endeavours to exalt his name
By pilfering from works of fame,
And from the stolen scraps compiles
A book in twenty different styles ;
But should the owners, bit by bit,
Reclaim the meanly-gotten wit,
Perhaps the bulky folio
Would in the process dwindle so,
That in the end, of all the theft,
One fluttering leaf would not be left.

FABLE XXVI.

Los que quieren hacer á dos partidos, suelen conseguir el desprecio de
ambos.

THE LION AND THE EAGLE.

As once, perplex'd with cares of state,
The Lion and the Eagle sate
In earnest consultation—
For, like the autocrats of men,
They held a congress now and then,
To put down innovation—

Among their topics of complaint,
Enough to vex a brute or saint,
The Eagle grumbled sadly,
That—though the bulk of them were bad—
Of all the subjects that he had,
The bat behaved most badly.

“This thing,” he cried, “this nondescript,
Whom nature in mistake equipp’d,
A mouse with wings of leather,
Climbs to my skyey palace oft,
And passes for a bird aloft,
Although without a feather.

“But quickly, if a quarrel rise,
Away the renegado flies,
And, dropping earthward, mutters
That he’s a real quadruped,
And better-born and better-bred
Than any bird that flutters.

“In short, the wretch in turn attacks
Both bird and beast behind their backs,
And even dares to slander
At times our royal selves, alas!
And says that you are half an ass,
And I am quite a gander.”

“What! half an ass!” the Lion cried,
“My majesty thus vilified!

 The bat—by all that’s regal—
No more shall tread the earth, I swear.”
“Nor shall it ever mount in air
 Again,” replied the Eagle.

And thus from earth and air outlaw’d,
(For both the monarchs are abroad
 By day in their dominions,)
The bat is forced to shun the light,
And only dares to ply at night
 His solitary pinions.

So merchant-authors—they who range
Between Parnassus and the ’Change,
 Sole denizens of neither—
Who seek to play a double game,
To grub for gold and fly at fame,
 Are seldom bless’d with either.

FABLE XXVII.

Hal trages propios de algunas profesiones literarias, con los quales aparen-
tan muchos el talento que no tienen.

THE MONKEY.

THE proverb says—and so say I—

That clothe a monkey as you will,
In any dress of any dye,

He will but be a monkey still;
And hence, to prove the proverb true,
My present fable takes its cue.

Upon a time, then—to begin

From the beginning, and relate
The story as I find it in
A chronicle of ancient date,

That slumbers on a convent shelf
Unread by any save myself—

A Monkey, on a certain day,
Had dress'd his person in a suit
Of clothes so singularly gay
And many-colour'd, that the brute
Unto a chance-observer might
Have seem'd a “tumbler stage-bedight.” *

Perhaps they were his master's gift—
For, verily, with all his art
He scarcely could have made a shift
To make a suit so very smart;
Or, tempted by the rich brocade,
Perhaps he stole them ready-made;

Perhaps—But why should I digress,
And nicely canvass *pro* and *con*

* The nimblest tumbler stage-bedight
To thee is but a clumsy wight.—*Joanna Baillie.*

His right and title to the dress,
Or how the deuce he put it on?
My proper task is but to tell
The consequences that befell.

Apparell'd, then, from head to heel,
The Monkey felt at once, I ween,
As women in such cases feel,
A furious longing to be seen—
As knowing that the costliest dress,
If not display'd, is valueless;

And knowing, too, with what delight
His native tribe beyond the main
Would greet the unaccustom'd sight,
He made an effort, broke his chain,
And, leaping through the window, ran
Along the road to Tetuan.

But how he travell'd night and day,
Without a guide or guide-book, o'er

The mountain range, and found his way
From the sierra to the shore ;
And how he cross'd the narrow sea
That severs Spain from Barbary ;

Whether, embarking in a boat,
He drifted over with the tide,
Or, like Leander, doff'd his coat,
And swam unto the other side—
Are points admitting of dispute,
On which my chronicle is mute.

For here the writer, though he is
On most occasions most exact,
Grows unaccountably remiss,
And merely states the meagre fact,
That on a time the Monkey ran
Away, and got to Tetuan.

But round him, when he reach'd the place,
A troop of naked monkeys press'd,

With wonder stamp'd on every face,
To welcome the distinguished guest,
Whom Providence, they all agreed,
Had sent them in their hour of need.

For having on that morning plann'd
A forage party to explore
A distant quarter of the land,
The tribe had met upon the shore
To choose a captain whose address
And knowledge might ensure success.

When thinking it beyond dispute,
That one who strutted in a pair
Of breeches must be more acute
Than if he went exposed and bare,
They judged him fit to lead the host,
And proffer'd him *nem. con.* the post.

So stepping with a stately stride,
Like one accusom'd to command,

Our hero undertook to guide
The tribe unto the promised land ;
But, knowing nothing of the way,
He led them presently astray.

And day by day, through wet or dry,
By sand or swamp—a barren waste,
That yielded not the least supply
Adapted to the monkey taste—
Without an interval of rest,
He kept them on their fruitless quest.

Till grown as lean as Pharoah's kine,
And forced by hunger to confess
That, though his dress was wondrous fine,
Their leader was without address,
The troop dismiss'd him with disgrace,
And chose another in his place.

The moral of the tale is plain :—
A man may wear a doctor's gown,

But still, despite his garb, retain

The mind and manners of a clown;

For, clothe a booby as you will,

What is he but a booby still?

FABLE XXVIII.

Nadie emprenda obra superior á sus fuerzas.

THE TURNSPIT AND THE ASS.

THE reader, who has ever been
In inn or convent, must have seen
A strange cylindrical machine
To turn a spit—
A wooden wheel, with many a cog
Or step within, and set agog
By the momentum of a dog,
Who climbs in it.

A cur, who once began to find
This treadmill of the kitchen kind
A tiresome task, and felt inclined
To take the air.

Exclaim'd, "Alas! I ache with pain,
And, after all, I only gain
Some bone that makes me long in vain
For better fare.

"Why should I stay for ever mew'd,
To lick my lips for lack of food,
The slave of man's ingratitude,
When I may flee,
And leave each object of my hate,
My spit and master, to their fate,
To rust and starve in idle state
For want of me?"

He watch'd his time, and left the cage—
But, ere he had got half a stage
Beyond the town, his puppy rage
Was roused anew;
For, as he clombe a mountain side,
Another wheel more huge and wide
To which a weary Ass was tied,
Appear'd in view.

“I pity thee, poor patient Ass,
For thou art roasting meat, alas!
And mindest me of what I was,”

The Turnspit cried.

“God help thee for thy little wit!
I am not drudging at a spit,
But drawing water from a pit,”

The Ass replied.

“True,” quoth the cur, “I see it now;
But what a bungling beast art thou!
I’ll share thy task, and shew thee how

It should be done;

For though thy wheel exceeds a score
Of such as I have turn’d before,
And weighs a hundred-weight or more,

The more’s the fun.

“I’ll work, and earn enough to-day
To keep us for a week in play”—
But here the Ass, with scornful bray,

Resumed at length:

“Return, poor truant, to thy spit—
'Twas made for thee, and thou for it;
And work like mine would ill befit
A puppy's strength.”

Let every bard consult the line
(’Tis Horace’s* advice and mine)
To which his talents most incline,
And ascertain
The measure of his powers; for he
May turn a sonnet cleverly,
To whom the epic song would be
Too hard a *strain*.

* Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, æquam
Viribus, et versate diu, quid ferre recusent,
Quid valeant humeri.—*Ars Poetica*.

FABLE XXIX.

Hai casos en que es necessaria la crítica severa.

THE RAT AND THE AUTHOR.

A RAT, that once, by some unlucky doom,
Had made its way into an author's room,
Began, in quest of food, with curious snout,
To rummage it industriously throughout,
But finding it, if not entirely bare,
Too sparsely furnish'd to have aught to spare,
At last, for lack of meal, or any mite
That might have better pleased its appetite,
Was forced, by hunger's long-protracted throes,
To make a meal on scraps of verse and prose,

And though at first averse to such a course,
Submitted to it as its sole resource,
And eating now an essay, now an ode,
Abode contented in its new abode.

At length the owner, seeing with dismay
His manuscripts diminish day by day,
Began to smell a rat, and guess'd the kind
Of guest that at his cost so freely dined.
He tried a trap, to ascertain the fact,
And catch the culprit in the very act;
He tried a cat, too, who could not refuse
Her help unto a man who loved the *Mews*;
But every scheme in which he put his trust
Was foil'd—the glutton would not bite the dust.
In vain Grimalkin kept upon the watch,
The Rat was shy, and came not to the scratch;
Was up to trap, too, and forbore to wet
A whisker in the poison nightly set;
In short, by chewing literary fare,
It managed to eschew each various snare,

And still remained at large, a harden'd thief,
Though often turning over a new leaf.

One effort more, ere yet it was too late,
Our author made; and, hoping to abate
The nuisance or suppress it, put to press
Some manuscripts—but still without success.
The Rat upon the printed copies fell
With tooth and nail, and liked them just as well,
Bored through the boards with all a bookworm's rage,
And grubb'd, in search of grub, from page to page;*
And even when, in his despair, the man
Of learning, hitting on another plan
To save his literary treasures, spread
A litter of blank paper in their stead

* This line was suggested by the recollection of a similar one in the following unpublished improptu—

What is a Bookworm?

What is a Bookworm? Tell me, if you can;
I do not mean the insect, but the man.

Answer.

A reptile whom a wit like Hood might dub
A grub that grubs in Grub-street for its grub.

About the room, the reptile, far too wise
To think that any blank would prove a prize,
Rejected the *carte-blanche*, and merely nibbled,
As heretofore, the printed or the scribbled.

“How hard a fate,” the Author cried, “is mine,
Compell’d to labour that a Rat may dine,
And glut his greedy tooth with prose and rhyme
That promised to defy the tooth of Time!
Condemn’d to penury, in an attic placed,
I write for one who hath no Attic taste,
And waste my precious ink”—but with the word
Another and a better scheme occur’d,
And, drugging with corrosive sublimate
His ink, he wrote, inspired by deadly hate,
No matter what—his hopes were *ratified*,
The Rat devour’d the manuscript, and died.

Of such a fate let certain critics—they
Who look on every author as their prey,
Who nibble at his fame, and never spare
The choicest products of the brain—beware;

For authors may retort, and, now and then,
Some irritated bard will dip his pen
In venom, and review in "words that burn"*
His dastardly reviewers in their turn.

* Scatters from her pictured urn
Thoughts that breathe and words that burn.—*Gray*.

FABLE XXX.

Quando un Autor ha llegado á ser famoso, todo se le aplaude.

THE PETIT-MAITRE.

SIR HARRY, who was reckon'd far and near
 A paragon of elegance and taste,
 Because he wore some forty suits a year,
 And spent his money with the wildest waste—

Determined, for a whim, to put his fame
 Unto the proof, and, purchasing a pair
 Of cheap and showy bracelets, gave the same,
 Upon her birth-day, to his favourite fair.

“A thousand thanks, dear Hal!” exclaim'd the maid,
 “What lovely bracelets! how these brilliants shine!

So rich a gift can never be repaid !

No taste is half so exquisite as thine !”

So should some fashionable author write

A worthless book, the public, I’ll engage,

Will hail it with extravagant delight,

And swear that genius beams from every page.

FABLE XXXI.

Tambien en la Literatura suele dominar el espiritu de paisanage.

THE OSTRICH, THE DROMEDARY AND THE FOX.

ALTHOUGH they never meet like men

To play at hazard or ecarté,

The beasts assemble now and then,

And hold in some sequester'd glen

A conversazione party.

And thus it chanced one evening, that

A troop of them had got together,

When, after some prelusive chat—

Some twaddle, just as stale and flat

As Englishmen's about the weather—

They straight proceeded to descant
 And comment on the different merits
 Which every creature—from the ant
 Unto the mighty elephant—
 According to its kind, inherits.

“Of all the animals that live,”
 The Ostrich cried, “and with all deference
 For other’s sentiments, I give,
 Without a single ‘but’ or ‘if,’
 The Dromedary much the preference.”

The Dromedary, thus preferr’d,
 Repaid in kind the obligation,
 And said in language as absurd:
 “In aught that may become a bird,
 The Ostrich ‘whips’ the whole creation”

The rest, who heard them with surprise
 And laughter which they scarce could smother,
 Were sorely puzzled to surmise
 What motive such a pair of “Guys”
 Could have for praising one another.

Was it, perchance, because the twain
 Had scraggy necks and burly bodies,
 And heads too little to contain
 A greater quantity of brain
 Than might be lodged within a noddy's?

Or might it be that both possess'd
 Peculiar organs of digestion? *
 Or was it—but in vain they guess'd,
 And tried to solve what seem'd, at best,
 A difficult and doubtful question.

Till just as they began to pause,
 Bewilder'd in their speculation,
 The Fox exclaim'd: "I think the cause
 Of this reciprocal applause
 Admits of easy explanation.

"The creatures are compatriots, born
 And bred in Araby the Stony;

* In the Spanish—

"¿O porque tienen en el pecho un callo?"

And hence, despite the general scorn,
 With fancied charms they each adorn
 And over-rate their brother crony.”*

The Fox conjectured not amiss ;
 And, in the commonwealth of letters,
 A wretched author often is,
 From motives as absurd as this,
 Preferr'd and praised above his betters.

* Amor patriæ ratione valentior omni.

OVID. Ex Ponto, Epist. III., Lib. I

FABLE XXXII.

A los que compran libros solo por la encuadernacion.

THE GIPSY'S ASS.

YESTERDAY I chanced to pass
In the market-place an Ass,
Dress'd and dizen'd for the fair
In a style that made me stare.
He could hardly step or straddle
Underneath his ample saddle,
And his netted breeching, bound
With a fringe that swept the ground ;
While his new, or newly varnished,
Bridle was profusely garnished
With some dozen bells that rang
With a never-ceasing clang.

Ribbons of the brightest hue,
Green and yellow, red and blue,
Each, like bannerols outspread,
Flared and flutter'd from his head ;
And a plume of feathers on it,
Such as deck a Paris bonnet,
Toppled o'er his ears and face
With a most seductive grace.
Yet the Ass was weak and old,
Fit for nought but—to be sold.
This the knave who own'd it knew,
Vagrant of a gipsy crew,
And, to trick some simple buyer,
Trick'd it in this strange attire.
He succeeded ; for a clown
Saw it, as he paced the town,
Liked it well, and, in a trice
Paying down the Gipsy's price,
Took it home, and, full of glee,
Call'd his neighbours forth to see
What a bargain he had both in
Such a beast and such a clothing.

But amid the long and loud
Plaudits of the wondering crowd,
One more prudent than the rest,
Half in earnest, half in jest,
Thus his sentiments express'd :
“There’s a proverb—I have faith
In all adages—which saith,
‘Ware the pig that’s in a poke—
‘Ware the maid that’s in a cloak.
If you would not be trepann’d,
Let them both be strictly scann’d.’
So this Ass of thine, I fear,
May, despite its goodly gear,
Prove a bargain blindly bought,
Worth intrinsically nought.
Strip it, then, and let us see
What its worth may really be.”

When the donkey’s gear was off,
How the crowd began to scoff!
Where the pad had press’d, they saw
Both its shoulders rubb’d and raw ;

On its buttocks scores of bunions,
Clustering like a rope of onions ;
On its belly many a sore
Which the girth conceal'd before ;
Corns and warts as big as eggs,
Sprains and spavins in its legs—
But the muse grows too minute ;
Reader, let us cut the brute.

'Mid the laughter that ensued
From the mocking multitude,
Still a voice above the rest
Thus the silly clown address'd :—
“ What a creature ! By the mass,
This can scarce be call'd an Ass ;
'Tis a counterfeit, and thou
Art the real ass, I vow.”

Thus, to end my fable—for all
Apologues must have a moral—
Many a blockhead merely looks
To the covers of his books ;

In their purchase never minding,
If the gilding and the binding
Please his eye, though all within
Be not worth a single pin—
Buying, like a foolish fellow,
“Nought but leather and prunella.”

FABLE XXXIII.

El libro que de suyo es malo, no dexa de serlo porque tenga tal qual cosa buena.

THE WOLF AND THE SHEPHERD.

A WOLF, that chancèd, at close of day,
 To meet a Shepherd on his way,
 Accosted, in a crafty strain
 Of courtesy, the startled swain :
 “ I marvel much, my friend,” said he,
 “ At your antipathy to me.
 For though I know that common fame
 Hath given me an evil name,
 Yet, if the case were fairly tried,
 No brute was ever more belied.
 I scorn to wrong you ; and, instead
 Of meriting dislike or dread,

Deserve your gratitude, in fact,
By many a serviceable act.
My skin defends you in its fold
From summer's heat and winter's cold ;
My very teeth—of which the sight
Appears to fill you with affright—
Assist the gilder to impart
Their burnish unto works of art ;
My claws a certain cure supply
For every ailment of the eye ;
And, rightly seethed, my fat distils
An unguent for a host of ills."

"Accursed animal !" replied
The Shepherd, "thou art not belied !
For while the business of thy life
Is rapine, treachery and strife,
The trifling merit that can be
In any way ascribed to thee,
If multiplied a hundred times,
Would not atone for half thy crimes."

A reader might with justice say
The like of many a modern lay.
For thus, if vice inspire the strain,
No art can wash away the stain,
No wit, no harmony redeem
The inherent baseness of the theme ;
And every worthy man will curse,
Howe'er it flow,* the guilty verse.

* Curst be the verse, how well soe'er it flow,
That tends to make one worthy man my foe.—*Pope*.

FABLE XXXIV.

Muy necio y envidioso es quien aféa un pequeño descuido en una obra grande.

THE OX AND THE GRASSHOPPER.

AN Ox was toiling at the plough,
When from the sod, with shrilly cry,
A Grasshopper exclaim'd : " I vow,
That furrow, friend, is quite awry."

" 'Tis true," the patient Ox replied ;
" But blame me not—for could you tell
That this was warp'd, if those beside
Were not exactly parallel ?

" I do my best, and work for one,
A kindly master, who will make,

Since all the rest is rightly done,
Allowance for a small mistake."

So critics often overlook
A thousand beauties, to detect
Some trifling blemish in a book,
And damn it for that one defect.

FABLE XXXV.

Ordinariamente no es Escritor de gran mérito el que hace venal el ingenio.

THE MACAW AND THE MARMOT.

A BIRD of bright plumage, a scarlet Macaw,
 As it gazed from its perch in a balcony, saw
 An ugly Marmot, which a barefooted boy,
 A vagabond fresh from the Alps of Savoy,
 Was showing, as something exceedingly rare,
 To a crowd of admirers below in the square.

“How strange,” cried the bird in the balcony, when
 It had gazed for a space, “is the conduct of men!
 For while they are willing to pay for the sight
 Of a creature like this—a ridiculous fright,
 They hardly bestow a regard upon me,
 Though I am as lovely as lovely can be,

And all who may happen to come by the way
Are welcome to see me without any pay.
Yet the beast may be rare, and the rabble below
May deem it, no doubt, a delectable show ;
But I, for the life of me, cannot admire
A creature that lets out its talents for hire,
And think that, whatever attainments may fall
To its share, its venality cancels them all."

It chanced that an author, in passing along,
Had paused for a while in the midst of the throng.
At the speech of the bird he slunk, blushing, away,
For he was a hack in a bookseller's pay—
A writer of all work, professedly hired
To scribble whatever his master required.

FABLE XXXVI.

Si es vicioso el uso de voces extrãgeras modernamente introducidas, tambien lo es, por el contrario, el de las antiquadas.

THE PORTRAIT PAINTER.

I.

THE swarms of Gallic phrases which of late
 Have crept, like wasps, into the Spanish hive,
 And spoil'd our honied idiom, are my hate ;
 Nor less I hate those writers, who revive
 Dead diction that was worthless when alive.*

* Some, by old words, to fame have made pretence,
 Ancients in phrase, meer moderns in their sense ;
 Such labour'd nothings, in so strange a style,
 Amaze th' unlearn'd, and make the learned smile.
 Unlucky, as Fungoso in the play,
 These sparks, with awkward vanity, display
 What the fine gentleman wore yesterday ;
 And but so mimic ancient wits at best,
 As apes our grandsires, in their doublets drest.

These lovers of the obsolete and vile
Remind me of a tale, in which I'll strive—
By telling it in their own motley style,
Half modern, half antique—to make my reader smile.

II.

A certain Painter, seeing with despight
How much mankind were prone to over-rate
The ancient artists, fancied that he might,
By mimicking their quaint costume, amate
His picturals with those of olden date ;
So being bidden on a time to take
The semblaunt of a knight of high estate,
He thought, for greater fame and lucre's sake,
To paint it in a garb of antiquated make.

III.

So whenas he had cunningly pourtray'd
The visnomie as like as like mote be,
And, limning forth the figure, had array'd
The same in vestiments most strange to see,
In sort as they were fashion'd formerlie—

He took the picture, certain of success,
Unto the knight, who view'd with mickle gree
The perfect pourtraicture, but nathëless
Y-marvell'd much to find it dight in such a dress.

IV.

But eftsoons he avized within his mind
A method to discharge the Painter's score,
By which he mote apay him kind for kind ;
For recollecting that he had a store
Of coins which had been stricken long afore,
In times ere Spain, the thrall of Moorish sway,
Expell'd the swarthy paynim from her shore,
He fet them from the scryne in which they lay,
And tender'd them unto the Painter for his pay.

V.

"Why, this barbaric coin," the Painter cried,
"Will buy ne meat, ne drink—I'll none of it."
"None other hast thou earn'd," the knight replied,
"For n'is that dress, thou man of little wit,
For modern usance equally unfit ?

A dress which now—albé it whilom might
Have graced a king or kezar, I admit—
Beseems an alguazil, but not a knight ;
Thy wage is like thy work, and thou art well acquitted.

VI.

“But take the portraict back, amend its guise,
Transmew the plummy helm into a hat,
Reduce that sword to half its present size,
And doff the collar for a plain cravat ;
For certes, if in gere the like of that
I were to go abroad, my sibs would say,
‘What sort of wight is this? we know him nat.’
Then when the whole is set in right array,
Thy guerdon shall be paid in coinage of the day.”

VII.

Now turn we from the pencil to the pen—
And, reader, if the Painter’s folly raise
Thy smile, bestow a smile on authors, when
They copy, with the hope to win thy praise,
The phraseology of ancient days ;

As if the refuse and the trash of yore—
Each coarse habiliment or coarser phrase,
Coeval with the Cid Compeador—
Deserved to be revived, and last for evermore.

FABLE XXXVII.

Suelen ciertos Autores sentar como principios infalibles del arte aquello mismo
que ellos practican.

THE COCK, THE HOG AND THE LAMB.

WITHIN a narrow paddock were confined
Three animals, who managed, strange to say,
Though differing in character and kind,
To live together in a friendly way ;—
A Hog that ever in its sty reclined,
A Cock, whose crowing heralded the day,
And, last and least experienced of the three,
A Lamb whose limbs were all alive with glee.

The Hog, upon a time, address'd the Lamb :—
“ Believe me, youngster, what we most require
Is sleep. Behold how sleek and fat I am,
Who snore from morn till night, and never tire.

All other joys of life are but a sham,
 Unless it be to guzzle in the mire;
 In short, the chief felicity of sheep,
 As well as swine, consists, my friend, in sleep."

The Cock, upon another time, began:

"Attend to my advice, my pretty dear—
 Resolve to sleep as little as you can,
 And rise before the sun throughout the year.
Experto crede, 'tis the only plan
 To keep the circulation brisk and clear;
 For sluggishness is hurtful to our kind,
 And enervates the body and the mind."

The Lamb, at first, was puzzled and surprised;

But when at length, on second thoughts, he guess'd
 That both his counsellors had but advised

The course of life that pleased themselves the best,
 And suited best their natures, he despised

Their selfish promptings, and at once profess'd
 That he would sleep or wake, as instinct might
 Direct him—for she would direct aright.

Thus many an author is disposed to draw
His precepts from his practice, and impose
On others, who are juvenile and raw,
His own peculiarities, as those
Which ought to form a precedent and law
For all who would excel in verse or prose;
But genius teaches an unerring way,
While rules of art too often lead astray.

FABLE XXXVIII.

Quien escribe para el público, y no escribe bien, no debe fundar su disculpa
en el mal gusto del vulgo.

THE ASS AND HIS MASTER.

“THE vulgar have no taste—and every piece,
Good, bad, or middling, is alike to them ;
For, right or wrong, and merely as caprice
May actuate, they praise it or condemn.
Hence I who cater for them, though I could
Produce far better dramas if I would,
Supply them with indifferent ones, because,
While costing me less labour than the good,
They win me, or may win, as much applause.”

A scribe, who pander'd to a vicious age
By writing ribald farces for the stage,

In words like these attempted to excuse
The wilful prostitution of his Muse ;
But a shrewd critic, who was standing by
And heard him, made this apposite reply :—

“ Once on a time, a peasant had an Ass,
Which he was wont to feed with straw alone,
And, as he fed it, still his custom was

To taunt the brute in a sarcastic tone.
‘ This straw is sorry provender,’ he cried,

‘ But, luckily, thy palate is not nice,
And since thou eatest and art satisfied,

Why, so am I—and think it may suffice
As well as any that I might provide

Of better quality and higher price.’
At length, impatient of the frequent gibe,
Though patience is the badge of all the tribe,
The creature turn’d, and with distended jaw
Reproachfully address’d the man of straw :

‘ If, forced by hunger—for an ass must live—
I eat whatever trash you chuse to give,

Think not that I’m content with it ; for I,

Had I my wish, would rather have some wheat,

And would you but afford me a supply,
I'd thank you for so exquisite a treat,
And prove how heartily an Ass could eat.' "

Let trashy dramatists no more impute
To lack of public taste their own demerit;
The public, though a much-enduring brute,
Believe me, is sufficiently acute,
If they would treat her better, to prefer it.

FABLE XXXIX.

A los que se aprovechan de las noticias de otros, y tienen la ingratitud de no citarlos.

THE SPORTSMAN AND THE FERRET.

HALF dead with heat and thirst and toil,
A Sportsman, at the close of day,
Returning homeward with his spoil,
O'ertook a neighbour on the way,
And, sportsman-like, began to brag
About the contents of his bag.

“Although, beneath the scorching ray,
Since morn I've traversed many a league,

These rabbits," he observed, "repay
Abundantly the day's fatigue.
I never had such luck before,
And must have caught at least a score.

"I scorn to boast, my friend—but see,
Nay, feel them, count them if you will,
A catch like this, you must agree,
Evinces most uncommon skill,
And proves that in the district round
No better Sportsman can be found."

Just then the Ferret at his back,
Indignantly protruding out,
Between the meshes of the sack
In which it swung, its pointed snout,
Exclaim'd : "Allow me, I beseech,
A word of comment on your speech.

"Within their burrows safe and sound
These rabbits might be lurking yet,

Had I not track'd them under-ground
And driven them into the net ;
Whilst you had nought to do, but stand
And take them as they came to hand.

“I work'd the most ; and why, I pray,
If any honour can accrue
From aught that has been done to-day,
Should it be all engross'd by you ?
Some little praise, methinks, might be
Bestow'd deservedly on me.”

But, treating the imputed wrong
And just reproof with cold disdain,
The Sportsman, as he trudged along,
Persisted in his braggart strain,
Still arrogating all the merit,
Without allusion to the Ferret.

Thus, plagiarists, intent on spoil,
Unscrupulously ply their trade,

And, profiting by others' toil,
Without acknowledging the aid,
Derive their literary fame
From sources which they never name.

FABLE XL.

A ciertos libros se les hace demasiado favor en criticarlos.

THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE LIZARDS.

A PHILOSOPHER one day,
(For philosophers should stray
From their folios, to look,
Now and then, at Nature's book,)
As he took his evening walk,
Found two Lizards on a stalk,
Whose uncommon shape and size
So excited his surprise,
That, the better to inspect them,
He determined to dissect them,
And at once removed the brace
From their pleasant resting-place ;

Then selecting first, for matter
Of experiment, the fatter,
With a cut from tail to snout
Turn'd the creature inside out,
And with scientific stare,
As it lay exposed and bare,
Scann'd the disembowell'd mass
Through a microscopic glass.
Back and belly, gut and gizzard,
Every portion of the Lizard,
Toss'd and tumbled topsy-turvy,
Underwent the strictest survey;
And our sage, when he had finger'd
Every scrap of it, and linger'd
For a length of time in mute
Admiration of the brute,
Seized, like one inspired, his pen,
Wrote and mused and wrote,—and then
Plied his butchering task agen.

While he ponder'd thus with pleasure,
Like a miser, o'er his treasure,

To the scene of slaughter some
Brother sages chanced to come ;
And no sooner saw him than,
Gathering round him, they began
To philosophize with him
O'er each lacerated limb,
And, with equal frenzy fired,
Cavill'd, question'd and admired.

Satisfied, at last, with his
Long and learn'd analysis,
Our anatomist withdrew
From the spot with all his crew ;
But, ere he departed, he
Set the other Lizard free,
Who, retreating to his small
Dwelling in a garden-wall,
Told his friends about his capture
And the crowd's excessive rapture.
"Though the tale may seem to be
Hardly credible," said he,

“ With these eyes I saw a score
Of Philosophers, or more,
Stand, for half a day at least,
Gazing at the dear deceased.
Writers err, when they describe
Lizards as a reptile tribe.
Were we not of higher birth
Than the grub that licks the earth,
Would a virtuoso skin us
To examine what’s within us,
And with such a wondering look
Put it all into a book ?
No—’tis obvious that we are
Of a nobler nature far ;
And the very men, who thus
Wilfully disparage us,
Must, whate’er they say, respect us—
Or they never would dissect us.”

Does not many a worthless scribe
Argue like the Lizard tribe ?

For, howe'er the critics may
Cut them up, the reptiles say :
" We have merit ; and the fact,
That our slightest works attract
Critical attention, is
An unerring proof of this.
For, whatever they may write
In their jealousy and spite,
Critics certainly respect us—
Or they never would dissect us."

FABLE XLI.

En ninguna facultad puede adelantar el que no se sujeta á principios.

THE TIGHT-ROPE DANCER AND HIS PUPIL.

A CERTAIN tight-rope dancer had
 A pupil, an unlucky lad—
 A lad possess'd of some ability,
 But fill'd with self-conceit, and prone
 To trust, in matters of agility,
 Unto his native parts alone.

One morning, when the youngster came
 To take his customary lesson,
 "This pole," he mutter'd, "which you name
 The counterpoise, and lay such stress on,

Instead, my master, as you say,
 Of helping me to cut a figure,
 The pole is sadly in my way,
 And paralyzes all my vigour.
 A *Diligencia*, forced to lag
 Beneath the pressure of its drag,*
 Is less impeded on the road,
 Than I, with limbs alert and limber,
 Am cramp'd and crippled by the load
 Of this confounded piece of timber.
 I'll fling the useless thing away,
 And soon convince you, if you doubt it,
 That any nimble dancer may
 Perform, at least, as well without it.

 "'Tis gone—and now observe me, how
 Intrepidly I tread the rope!

* The Spanish *Diligencia*, or public coach, is provided, like its French namesake, with a simple piece of machinery, by which a strong bar of wood is made to press against the hinder wheels and retard their motion in descending a declivity—thus answering all the purposes of the English drag-chain, with the additional advantage, that the driver is enabled to apply it without quitting his seat and stopping the vehicle.

It seems as if my limbs till now
Had never had sufficient scope.
I feel so unconfined and free
That I could dance for very glee ;
In short, I feel"—But while he spoke,
He lost his balance, fell, and broke
A brace of ribs. "Unhappy boy!"
The Master cried, with secret joy,
"Thy self-conceit, which made thee fling,
As an impediment, away
The counterpoise—the very thing
Which might have proved thy surest stay—
Is rightly punish'd ; but the fall,
However painful, will not be
Without its use, if it recall
This truth in after years to thee :—
That he who scorns the aid of art,
Is sure to stumble in his part."

FABLE XLII.

Por mas ridículo que sea el estilo retumbante, siempre habrá necios que le aplaudan, sólo por la razon de que se quedan sin entenderle.

THE CAT, THE LIZARD AND THE CRICKET.

SOME animals are very scientific,
 And have for every ailment a specific ;
 In fact, they regulate their whole organic
 Construction by a process quite botanic.
 They know each herb, and whether diuretic,
 Cathartic, or narcotic, or emetic,
 If febrifuge, or styptic, or prolific,
 Cephalic, sedative, or sudorific.

A Cat, a most pedantic rhetorician,
 In points of science, too, a strict precisian,
 Who always spoke in diction as emphatic
 As any rhymster ranting in his attic,

One day address'd himself unto a Lizard
 In terms that would have posed a witch or wizzard:
 "My friend, when I feel turgid or hydropic,
 I always masticate some *heliotropic*."

The Lizard, though she knew her own vernacular,
 Was puzzled by a sentence so oracular,
 And understood as little of the topic
 As if the Cat had talk'd in Æthiopic;
 Till having chanced to notice her eccentric
 Companion cramming what he call'd his ventricle
 With sun-flower leaves, "Ha, ha," she cried ecstatically,
 "I have it, though you talk so enigmatically—
 The sun-flower, I suppose, is heliotropic,
 And you, just now, I guess, sir, are hydropic.
 But, since the meaning of a speech or lecture
 Should not, I think, be left unto conjecture,
 I'll frankly say, without the least apology,
 That I prefer more simple phraseology."

But, thinking differently, a tasteless Cricket
 Who heard the speech from an adjoining thicket,

And, though he found it quite incomprehensible,
 Concluded from the sound that it was sensible,
 Extoll'd, in terms the most encomiastic,
 A Cat who spoke in language so scholastic.

Some writers, thus, especially of lyrics,
 Are, like the Cat, ridiculous empirics,
 And use a style so hard and cabalistical
 That any meaning which they have is mystical—
 A bloated style, preposterously pedantic,
 With words of sound uncouth and bulk gigantic,*
 Enough to drive a common reader frantic.
 To lash these lovers of the hyperbolic,
 I have devised this fable ; and, in frolic,
 To point its application more sarcastically,
 Have mimick'd them, and written it bombastically.

* Words of gigantic bulk and uncouth sound.—*Gifford*.

FABLE XLIII.

La Literatura es la profesion en que mas se verifica el proverbio : ¿ Quien es tu enemigo? El de tu oficio.

THE FOX AND THE CATERPILLAR.

THE reader, peradventure, may
 Remember how the brute creation
 Assembled, on a certain day,
 For scientific conversation,
 And how that most ungainly brace,
 The Ostrich and the Dromedary,
 Bepraised each other, face to face,
 In terms so extraordinary,
 And how the Fox divined the cause
 Of their reciprocal applause ;*

* *Vide* FABLE XXXI., p. 91.

Well, if the courteous reader yet
Remember them, and wish to get
Some further news about the set,
I'll furnish him with information
Of what befel them, when they met
Upon a subsequent occasion.

One evening, as their annals state,
The Silkworm and its curious labours
Became a subject of debate

Among the congregated neighbours.
With ravish'd eyes they gazed upon
The yellow threads, which, one by one,
She wove around her, like a shroud ;
But when the whole cocoon was spun,
Its perfect fabrication won

A peal of plaudits, long and loud,
From every quarter of the crowd.
The sightless Mole himself express'd
An equal rapture with the rest,
And vow'd that he, though he had been
A traveller from his youth, and seen

The strangest sights on earth and under,
Had never seen so great wonder.

But from a nook in which he toil'd,
The Caterpillar dared to raise
A murmur of dissent, that spoil'd
The concord of the general praise ;
And damning, in a coarse tirade,
The tissue that the Silkworm made,
Express'd surprise that any brute,
Of understanding or repute,
Should really condescend to stare
A moment at such worthless ware.

The other members of the club
Received the speech with indignation,
And marvell'd why so vile a grub
Should deal in such vituperation ;
But though they ponder'd and revolved
The question long, it posed them quite,
Until the Fox arose, and solved
The secret of the creature's spite :

“The Caterpillar is,” said he,
“Himself a spinner, and prefers,
Howe’er inferior it may be,
The tissue that he spins to hers.”

Thus, envious scribes, to fame unknown,
Decry their more illustrious brothers,
As if they could enhance their own
By censuring the works of others.

FABLE XLIV.

Los que piensan que con citar una autoridad, buena ó mala, quedan disculpados de qualquier yerro, no advierten que la verdad no puede ser mas de una, aunque las opiniones sean muchas.

THE WATCHES.

I.

A TROOP of friends, invited to a feast,
 Had all assembled, save a single guest,
 Who fail'd to join the party, till at least
 Three quarters of an hour behind the rest ;
 And as their hunger, it must be confess'd,
 Had not declined with the declining day,
 They one and all, when he arrived, express'd
 Impatience and surprise at his delay,
 And ask'd why he had crept or slept upon the way.

II.

But heedless of their anger, and, in place
Of supplicating their forgiveness, he
Produced his watch, and pointed to its face,
To prove his punctuality ; for " See,"
He cried, " the hand is on the stroke of three,
And I am here, in fact, as you must know,
Before the appointed time."—" It cannot be,"
The rest rejoin'd ; " your watch is much too slow—
You should have been with us almost an hour ago."

III.

" Well, I can do no more, my friends, than cite
My watch, which is, and ought to be, my guide ;
I go by it, and if it be not right,
The fault is none of mine," the man replied—
A plea in which too many men confide,
Who think that any error or abuse
Which they commit is amply justified,
If they can only manage to produce
The least authority, by way of an excuse.

IV.

But, to return—at once, to end the doubt
And ascertain the real time, they drew
Their several watches confidently out ;
But with the act their doubt the greater grew,
For none were found alike, and which was true ?
They differ'd widely—one had tick'd its last,
And stopp'd, though not a stop-watch, just at two,
While others had advanced as much too fast,
And one was nearly four, and one a quarter past.

V.

At last, as their perplexity increased,
The disputants decided to refer
The question to the giver of the feast,
Who settled it at once without demur ;
For drawing forth a choice chronometer,
Which, being regulated carefully
By an exact meridian, could not err,
He proved the actual time of day to be
Eleven minutes and nine seconds after three.

VI.

Thus ended the dispute ; but at the close,
The Host remark'd unto the gaping throng :
“ My friends, how plainly this example shows
That all authorities, however strong
And sure they seem, are apt to lead you wrong !
The best of them are fallible and frail ;
But truth, imperishable truth, ere long,
Although a thousand errors may assail,
Will triumph o'er them all, and in the end prevail.”

FABLE XLV.

A los que juntan muchos libros, y ninguno leen.

THE OILMAN'S ASS.

AN Ass had trudged with many a skin
Of olive oil from town to town,
When, late at night, he reach'd an inn,
And gladly laid his burthen down.

But while his master took a seat
Beside the fire within the hall,
The beast, though fond of light and heat,
Was driven to a dismal stall ;

And, stumbling on the slippery floor,
And striking, as he groped his way,

His head against the lowly door,
Express'd his anguish in a bray.

“ 'Tis hard,” he cried, “that all my toil
Should be repaid with gloom and damp,
And I, who carry so much oil,
Be left without a single lamp !”

The story of the Oilman's Ass
Reminds the moralizing muse
Of coxcombs who collect a mass
Of volumes which they ne'er peruse ;

And unassisted by the light
Of wit and wisdom on their shelves,
Which might dispel their mental night,
Are dull and in the dark themselves.

FABLE XLVI.

Las portadas ostentosas de los libros engañan mucho.

THE TRAVELLERS.

A BRACE of Travellers chanced to lose their way
 Among the hills, and nearly were benighted,
 When luckily they reach'd, at close of day,
 A village, and alighted.

For though they found no inn there, as they hoped,
 To shelter them from all their toils and dangers,
 The owners of two houses promptly oped
 Their gates unto the strangers.

And, tempted by the proffer'd food and rest,
 The friends submitted to a separation,

And each selected, as it pleased him best,
A separate habitation.

Though built in the same village, side by side,
The dwellings into which they were conducted,
And for the night invited to abide,
Were differently constructed.

The one, with court and offices behind,
Presented a façade of vast expansion,
And seem'd, upon a transient view, design'd
To be some monarch's mansion.

And, emblematic of the owner's state,
Who deem'd himself no ordinary mortal,
A sculptured coat of arms, of ancient date,
O'erhung the marble portal.

The other, built upon a simpler plan,
Inferior in extent and elevation,
Was such a structure as bespoke a man
Of unpretending station.

But comfort reign'd within ; the rooms, if few,
Were tastefully and plentifully furnish'd,
And every thing, if not entirely new,
Was newly clean'd and burnish'd.

The fare was good, the wine was of the best ;
And, when the hospitable meal was over,
A bed, as soft and downy as a nest,
Received the younger rover.

But *fronti nulla fides* ; strange to say,
The other house that look'd so fine and roomy,
In which the elder had preferr'd to stay,
Was dirty, cold and gloomy.

Though fronted by a showy colonnade,
The pile was in a ruinous condition ;
And through unnumber'd rents that Time had made,
The tempest found admission.

The supper, too, was scanty ; and the guest
Was usher'd, when he left the thrifty table,

Into a sleeping room, which proved, at best,
No better than a stable.

And on a bed that shock'd both smell and sight,
A bed of matted flock that lay within it,
He tried in vain, throughout the live-long night,
To sleep one weary minute.

The simpleton, who in his choice of books
Is captivated by a specious title,
And judges of their contents by their looks,
Deserves a like requital.

FABLE XLVII.

El verdadero caudal de erudicion no consiste en hacinar muchas noticias,
sinó en recoger con eleccion las útiles y necesarias.

THE MAGPIE AND THE MONKEY.

“DEAR MADAM, I pray,”

Quoth a Magpie one day

To a Monkey who happen'd to come in her way—

For a Magpie can prate

At as ready a rate

On trifles as if they were matters of state,

Never caring a jot,

So that hearers be got,

Whether her talk may concern them or not—

“If you'll venture with me,

Dear Madam,” said she,

(From which phrase of "Dear Madam," instead of
"Dear Sir,"

An intelligent reader perhaps may infer
That the Monkey was not of the masculine gender,
An ugly, hirsute,
Disagreeable brute,
But one of the sex
To which we annex

The epithets "lovely" and "gentle" and "tender,")

"Dear Madam," quoth she,

"If you'll but come with me

To my snug little home in the trunk of a tree,
I'll show you such treasures of art and virtù,
Such articles, old, mediæval and new,
As a lady of taste and discernment like you
Will be equally pleased and astonish'd to view—
A collection so large and so excellent too,
That, unless you beheld it and rummaged it through,
As I trust that you will without further ado,

You'd scarcely believe

How adroitly I thieve,

And carry away, spite of bailiff or reeve,

Each waif and each stray
That lies in my way,

As I roam through the forest by night or by day.
In an oak-tree hard by I have stow'd all these rarities ;
And if you'll come with me, I'll soon show you where
it is."

The Monkey agreed
At once to proceed,

And hopping along at the top of her speed,
To keep up with the guide,
Who flew by her side,

As eager to show as the other to see—

Presently came to the old oak-tree ;

When from a hole

In its mighty bole

In which she had cunningly hidden the whole,

One by one the Magpie drew,

And display'd her hoard to the Monkey's view :—

A buckle of brass,

Some bits of glass,

A garter dropp'd by a gipsy lass ;

A tatter'd handkerchief edged with lace,
The haft of a knife, and a tooth-pick case ;
An inch or so of a Cordelier's rope,
A very small cake of Castilian soap,
And a medal bless'd by the holy Pope ;
 Half a cigar,
 The neck of a jar,
A couple of pegs from a crack'd guitar ;
 Beads, buttons and rings,
 And other odd things,
Such as rarely are met with except in the cu-
riosity-shop of a furnishing Jew,
And such as my readers would think me an ass,
 if I
Tried to enumerate fully or classify.

“Enough,” says the proverb, “’s as good as a feast ;”
And, in fact, though the catalogue might be increased,
And a hundred more articles added at least,
 Some dozen or twenty
 Are *sat sapienti*,

Which means, if the reader is wise, they are plenty.

So why should I bore
His patience with more ?
Suffice it to say,
Without further delay,

That the long exhibition at length was o'er,
And that, having gone, one by one, through the whole,
And carefully pack'd them again in the hole,
Alarm'd at the pause,
And not without *caws*,
The Magpie look'd anxiously down for applause.

The Monkey meanwhile,
With a shrug and a smile,
Having silently eyed the contents of the pile,
And found them, in fact, one and all very vile,
Resolved to depart,
And was making a start,
When, observing the movement with rage and dismay,
The Magpie address'd her and press'd her to stay :
“ What, sister, I pray,
Have you nothing to say,
In return for the sight that I've shown you to-day ?

Not a syllable ?—hey ?

I'm surprised—well I may—

That so fine a collection, with nothing to pay,
Should be treated in such a contemptuous way.

I look'd for applause as a matter of right,
And certainly thought that you'd prove more polite ;

But envy and spite

Have dumbfounded you quite,

And your silence—I see it—is meant for a slight.

Well ! I'm punish'd aright—

'Tis just what I might

Have expected from such a malevolent sprite ;

And I curse my own folly, that made me invite

And take to my dwelling an ugly old testy mate,
A creature too stupid to relish a sight

Which none but collectors can properly estimate."

At length, when the Magpie had ceased to revile,

The Monkey replied with a cynical smile :

"Well, Ma'am, since my silence offends you," said she,

"I'll frankly confess,

That such trifles possess,

Though much to your taste, no attraction for me ;
For, though like yourself,
A collector of pelf,
Such trash, ere I'd touch it, might rot on a shelf,
And I'd not, by Saint Jago,
Out of my way go
A moment to pick up so vile a farago.
To the digging of roots,
And the prigging of fruits,
I strictly confine my industrial pursuits ;
And whenever I happen to find or to steal
More than will serve for a moderate meal,—
For my appetite's small, and I don't eat a deal—
In the pouches or craws
Which hang from my jaws,
And which I contract or distend at my pleasure,
I safely deposit the rest of my treasure,
And carry it home to be eaten at leisure.
In short, Ma'am, while you collect rubbish and rags,
A mass of *chiffonerie* not worth possessing,
I gather for use, and replenish my bags
With things that are really a comfort and blessing—

A reserve, if I need them, for future subsistence,
Adapted to lengthen and sweeten existence."

The Monkey's reply—for I must, if I'm able,
Elicit some practical hint from the fable—
Suited the Magpie, and suits just as well any
Quarterly, monthly or weekly miscellany,
Whose contents exhibit so often a hash
Oddly compounded of all kinds of trash,
That I wonder, whenever I chance to inspect them,
How editors have the bad taste to select them.

FABLE XLVIII.

Hay pocos que den sus obras á luz con aquella desconfianza y temor que debe tener todo Escritor sensato.

THE OWL AND THE TOAD.

AN Owl was sitting silently
 Within the hollow of a tree,
 When, just below, there came a Toad
 Along the middle of the road,
 Who, looking unabash'd about,
 Espied the bird of wisdom out.
 "Hallo," the reptile cried, "hallo !
 What makes you love concealment so,
 While such as I—the gay and fair,—
 Are all abroad, to take the air ?
 Come, show your horns, and let us see
 What sort of creature you may be."

“Alas !” replied the Owl, and slunk
The more into the hollow trunk,
“I never stir abroad by day,
To mingle with the fair and gay,
But in retirement wisely hide
The plainness which they would deride—
For if I aim’d at showing off,
The public would be sure to scoff;
And, sooth to say, I have a doubt
If even *you* should venture out,
And think you would not do amiss,
With such a form and such a phiz,
To creep into some hole, and lie,
Like me, conceal’d from every eye.”

How many of us, ere we print,
Might profit by my fable’s hint,
And learn, like wisdom’s bird, to brood
With wisdom’s self in solitude.*

* Wisdom’s self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude;
Where with her best nurse, contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings.

—MILTON.

But, like the toad, we vainly try
To captivate the public eye ;
And confident, in reason's spite,
That whatsoever we may write
Must be deserving of the light,
We rush abroad, and in the press
Expose our utter worthlessness.

FABLE XLIX.

Lo delicado y ameno de las Buenas-Letras no agrada á los que se entregan al estudio de una erudicion pesada y de mal gusto.

THE BEETLE.

I HAVE a thought, which an ingenious Muse
 Might shape into a fable. Such as she
 Can turn whatever subject she may chuse
 To good account ; and this of mine would be,
 If rightly treated, redolent of wit
 And moral argument. But, as for me,
 It is a theme which I am quite unfit
 To cope with ; for a fable, that shall please,
 Requires to have the smallest part of it
 Elaborated till it look like ease.

The thought or subject, then, which I propose
 That one more skilful than myself should sieze,

Relates unto the Beetle—how it goes
And gladly feeds upon each filthy thing,
But shuns, as if it loathed, the lovely rose.
For here a clever fabulist might bring
His faith or metaphysics into play,
And try with all his art to trace the spring
Of that black reptile's strange antipathy ;
And though his train of argument, no doubt,
Might lead the reader and himself astray,
Involved in many a labyrinthine bout
Of circumlocutory phrase—what then ?
He'd find a clue at length, to draw him out,
And explicate his subtle meaning, when,
Arriving duly at the fable's close,
He dropp'd this pithy moral from his pen :—
That even as the queen of flowers, the rose,
Is loathsome to the Beetle, so the best
And brightest portions of a book are those
Which tasteless critics chide beyond the rest.

FABLE L.

Al que trabaja algo, puede disimulársele que lo pregone : el que nada hace,
debe callar.

THE FROG AND THE HEN.

As once a Frog,
Who all day long had chatter'd from his bog,
Began to close
His mouth and eyes, and drop into a dose,
He chanced just then
To hear the sudden cackle of a hen—
“What sound is this?”
He cried, “dear Madam, what can be amiss,
That thus you scream,
And keep a quiet neighbour from his dream?”
The Hen replied,
Her feathers fluttering with maternal pride,

“I humbly beg
Your pardon, sir; but having laid an egg,
I could not chuse
To let you sleep in ignorance of the news.”—
“What! all this clatter
About a single egg!—so small a matter!”—
“True, neighbour, true,
'Tis but a single egg,—a small one too;
But if you blame
The rout that I have made about the same,
'Tis doubly wrong
In you to croak for nothing all day long.
The egg's of use,
And therefore I may brag with some excuse;
But the dull brute
That's unproductive should be also mute.”

FABLE LI.

Las obras que un particular puede desempeñar por sí sólo, no merecen
se emplée en ellas el trabajo de muchos hombres.

THE FOUR CRIPPLES.

A MAN who was born deaf and dumb, and, in fact,
Was unfit to commune with his kind,
On a time had some business of weight to transact
With one, as unfit, who was blind.

But though to the deaf man the blind could explain
By signs what he wanted to say,
Yet to him who was sightless the other in vain
Replied in a similar way.

They were greatly perplex'd, till there luckily pass'd
A comrade to whom they appeal'd—

A soldier who once carried arms, but, at last,
Had his arms carried off in the field.

He stopp'd, and translated the signs of the mute
Into words which were heard by the blind;
And the parties, adjusting the point in dispute,
Were finally both of a mind.

But a letter had still to be written and sent—
To communicate promptly to some,
Who took a great interest in the event,
The agreement to which they had come.

Here the soldier demurr'd—"Any service," quoth he,
"In my power you may freely command;
But, if writing is wanted, 'tis easy to see
That I cannot lend you a hand.

"A scribe must be sent for—there's one in the street
On whom you may safely depend;
But as he is lame, with the gout in his feet,
'Twill be better to go than to send."

So they went—and in terms which the armless and
blind

Dictated, the gouty one wrote ;
And, when it was seal'd, to the mute was assign'd
The task of conveying the note.

Now, though with their limbs and their senses complete,

Two men would have done it with ease,
Yet what they achieved was an arduous feat
To four so imperfect as these.

The case, as I've stated it, really occur'd ;
Or my readers might fancy that I
Had invented a fiction so very absurd,
With a covert design to imply—

That learned Academies often consist
Of members as much in default,
And include in the number a plentiful list
Of the deaf and the blind and the halt ;

That the facile affair of a "letter"* appears
 . A difficult business to them;
And their gravest *Transactions*, the labour of years,
 Are trifles which others contemn.

* Balzac, writing to Bois-Robert on the subject of the French Academy and their Dictionary, says: "Every one promises great things—when they meet, they do nothing. They have been six years employed on the letter F. I should be happy if I were certain to live till they get through G."

FABLE LII.

La Naturaleza y el Arte han de ayudarse reciprocamente.

THE FLINT AND THE STEEL.

A FLINT (for even flints can feel)
 Upon a time reproach'd the Steel,
 That, though he talk'd of *striking light*,
 Whene'er he struck her in the dark,
 His blows were very far from slight,
 As she could shew by many a mark.
 "Unless," cried she, "such conduct ceases,
 Unless you let me rest in peace,
 Instead of knocking me to pieces,
 Our further intercourse shall cease;
 And yet if I resort to such
 A measure of retaliation,

I grieve to think how very much

You'll suffer by the separation ;

For it is plain, that, when I'm gone,

You'll be of little use or none."—

"And you," replied the Steel, "will be

At least as useless without me."

Thus, art and genius must combine,

To make an author truly shine ;

For, as the latent sparks require

The Steel to strike them from the Flint,

An author's intellectual fire

Must be elicited by dint

Of study, or it will expire,

And never kindle into print.

FABLE LIII.

Descubrimiento útil para los que fundan su ciencia únicamente en saber
muchos títulos de libros.

THE COUNTRY SQUIRE.

A COUNTRY Squire, of greater wealth than wit,
 (For fools are often bless'd with fortune's smile,)
 Had built a splendid house, and furnish'd it
 In splendid style.

"One thing is wanted," said a friend; "for, though
 The rooms are fine, the furniture profuse,
 You lack a library, dear sir, for show,
 If not for use."

"'Tis true; but, zounds!" replied the Squire with
 glee,
 "The lumber-room in yonder northern wing

(I wonder I ne'er thought of it) will be

The very thing.

"I'll have it fitted up without delay

With shelves and presses of the newest mode
And rarest wood, befitting every way

A squire's abode.

"And when the whole is ready, I'll despatch

My coachman—a most knowing fellow—down,
To buy me, by admeasurement, a batch

Of books in town."

But ere the library was half supplied

With all its pomp of cabinet and shelf,
The booby Squire repented him, and cried

Unto himself:—

"This room is much more roomy than I thought ;

Ten thousand volumes hardly would suffice
To fill it, and would cost, however bought,

A plaguey price.

“Now, as I only want them for their looks,
It might, on second thoughts, be just as good,
And cost me next to nothing, if the books
Were made of wood.

“It shall be so. I’ll give the shaven deal
A coat of paint—a colourable dress,
To look like calf or vellum, and conceal
Its nakedness.

“And gilt and letter’d with the author’s name,
Whatever is most excellent and rare
Shall be, or seem to be, (’tis all the same,)
Assembled there.”

The work was done; the simulated hoards
Of wit and wisdom round the chamber stood,
In bindings some—and some, of course, in *boards*,
Where all were wood.

From bulky folios down to slender twelves,
The choicest tomes, in many an even row,

Display'd their letter'd backs upon the shelves,
A goodly show.

With such a stock, which seemingly surpass'd
The best collection ever form'd in Spain,
What wonder if the owner grew at last
Supremely vain?

What wonder, as he paced from shelf to shelf,
And conn'd their titles, that the Squire began,
Despite his ignorance, to think himself
A learned man?

Let every amateur, who merely looks
To backs and bindings, take the hint, and sell
His costly library—for painted books
Would serve as well.

FABLE LIV.

Para no alabar las obras buenas, algunos las suponen de fácil execucion.

THE ANT AND THE FLEA.

THOUGH ill-inform'd in all affairs,
 Some coxcombs are as self-sufficient,
 And arrogate as many airs
 As if they deem'd themselves omniscient;
 For whatsoever they are shown,
 However wonderful it may be,
 And absolutely as unknown
 To them as to a new-born baby,
 They shrug their shoulders, and declare,
 With many a "pshaw!" that the phenomenon,

Which you account so very rare,
Is, sooth to say, a very common one.

The fittest treatment to bestow
Upon such coxcombs is to lash them—
For satire is their dread, and, though
It may not cure, it will abash them;
And if an apologue of mine
Can punish or abate their sinning,
I'll not regret, though every line
Should cost me half an hour in spinning.

An Ant, conversing with a Flea,
Related, with the utmost *bonhomie*,
The arts of skill and industry
That mark'd the commonwealth's economy;
Told how they work'd from morn till night,
And yet contrived, by due division,
To make the daily labour light,
And execute it with precision;
Described their singular abode,
And, as she courteously conducted

Her guest through each compartment, shew'd
How cleverly it was constructed,
With cells impervious to the rain,
Long passages for ventilation,
And magazines to hold the grain
Collected for their winter ration ;
In short, exhibited to view
A system that might pass for fiction,
Had not experience proved it true,
Beyond the power of contradiction.

The Flea, a pert pretender, one
Who always jump'd to a conclusion,
Surmised that what the Ant had done
Must be of easy execution ;
And, far from finding it a theme
Suggestive of profound reflections,
Decried and ridiculed the scheme,
In short and snappish interjections.
"Of course—no doubt—exactly so—
But, prithee, prate no more about it—

It needs no explanation—no—

The thing is plain enough without it.
I'm not surprised; for though, I grant,
Your polity is well intended,

And creditable to an Ant,

It might, in most respects, be mended.

Were I to try, I could devise

A better scheme in half a minute;
And what you deem so wondrous wise,
Has nothing wise or wondrous in it."

The Ant, indignant at the gibe,

Replied: "I wish, my nimble neighbour,
That you would deign to join our tribe,

And regulate the common labour;

For haply, with the help of one

So clever and so conscious of it,

We should no longer blunder on,

But turn our industry to profit—

And still improving on the past,

By your example and direction,

Attain to excellence at last,
If not to absolute perfection."

"What you propose," rejoin'd the Flea,
Retreating with a hasty movement,
"Would prove an easy task to me,
And tend, no doubt, to your improvement;
But now, alas! I cannot stay,
For business calls me to a distance—
Good bye!—perhaps some other day
I may return to your assistance."

FABLE LV.

Nadie confiesa su ignorancia, por mas patente que ella sea.

THE MOLE AND OTHER ANIMALS.

SOME quadrupeds had met to play
 At blindman's-buff or hoodman-blind—
 The names by which the game, they say,
 Is known among mankind.

They were but six—a Rat, a Hare,
 A Fox, a Squirrel, and a Dog;
 And last, not least, an Ape was there,
 Who set them all agog.

For, but for him, the other five
 Would have been puzzled to devise

A plan by which they might contrive
To bind the buffy's eyes.

But, being handier than the rest,
Who had, in fact, no hands at all,
He undertook, at their request,
The tyeing of the shawl.

The knotty point had scarcely been
Adjusted, and the game begun,
When, luckily, an unforeseen
Event increased the fun ;

For, in her dwelling underground,
A Mole, who chanced to hear the rout,
Exclaim'd: "I'll join the merry round,
And see what they're about."

So having slowly groped her way,
And reach'd, at last, the upper earth,
She begg'd that they, who seem'd so gay,
Would let her share their mirth.

Her claim was readily allow'd—

The Ape, with an expressive grin,
Protesting that they would be proud
To take a stranger in.

But though she join'd their ranks, she proved
No fitting partner in the play,
And, in whatever way she moved,
Was ever in the way.

Bewilder'd in the giddy throng,
And jeer'd and jostled by them all,
She flounder'd hopelessly along,
And met with many a fall.

In short, she blunder'd so, that she
Was quickly caught; and it became
Her turn to be hoodwink'd, and be
The buffy of the game.

Now, though the Mole, as none can doubt,
Was qualified to play the part,

By nature's aid alone, without
The further aid of art;

And though, like those of all her kind,
Her eyes were cover'd with a crape
Of film, that almost made her blind,
She thus address'd the Ape:

"Make haste, and fix the bandage on,
And have a care that it be tight;
For of the present party none
Can boast so sharp a sight."

Apply the tale to man; and we
Shall find that he who least suspects
His own deficiencies, is he
Who has the most defects—

That, while humility of mind
Has mark'd the wise in every age,
The fool, to his own folly blind,
Still thinks himself a sage.

FABLE LVI.

Contra dos especies de malos Traductores.

THE SWORD AND THE SPIT.

AN ancient Sword, a keen well-temper'd blade,
By the best artist in Toledo made,
Had served, from sire to son, a race of knights,
And flash'd before them in a hundred fights,
Till one, a spendthrift, whose degenerate hand
Would rather grasp the bottle than the brand,
Disgraced a weapon ne'er disgraced before,
And pawn'd it to discharge a tavern score.
There, thrown aside with baser things, it lay
Unused and unregarded many a day,
Until it chanced, one morning, that the cook,
Who lack'd a Spit, espied it in its nook,

When thinking it, if not expressly made,
Adapted for the culinary trade,
She seized, and, thrusting it adroitly through
A lusty capon without more ado,
Contrived, by what she deem'd a clever hit,
To turn the ancient Sword into a Spit.

Ere long, and in the self-same place, occur'd
Another transmutation as absurd.
It happen'd that a rude unletter'd wight
Had, strange as it may seem, been dubb'd a knight,
And being thus entitled to possess
A rapier as an article of dress,
Resolved that he would purchase one, and went
Into a cutler's shop with that intent.
The shopman, who surmised that if the hilt
And scabbard were extravagantly gilt,
The edge and temper of the blade would be
Secure from any rigid scrutiny,
Express'd regret that he could not produce
A rapier ready for immediate use,
But promised to prepare without delay

And finish one against the following day;
When, having in the time contrived to fit
A hilt and scabbard to an ancient Spit,
He shew'd it to the knight, who much admired
And bought the weapon at the price required—
A price which would have vastly overpaid
The choicest that Ayala ever made,
And plainly proved the buyer as complete
A cully as the seller was a cheat.

Two classes of Translators may behold
Their likeness in the tale that I have told.
For some select an author of repute,
But, in translating, they, in fact, transmute,
Destroy his polish'd sense, his pointed wit,
And vulgarise a Sword into a Spit;
While others, rendering in a pompous style
Some work intrinsically low and vile,
A proof of misdirected powers afford,
And aggrandise a Spit into a Sword.

FABLE LVII.

Algunos emplean en obras frivolas tanto afan como otros en las importantes.

THE SQUIRREL AND THE HORSE.

FROM his covert in a tree,
Once a Squirrel chanced to see,
On the plain, a generous Steed
Galloping with all its speed,
But in every movement still
Subject to another's will,
And obeying each command
Of the rider's voice or hand.
Though the Squirrel felt amazed
By the sight on which he gazed,
Yet the swiftness and the grace
Of the courser's measured pace,

Woke within his envious breast
Feelings which he thus express'd:—
“All your exploits in the course,
Skill, activity, and force,
Wondrous as they seem to be,
Have no novelty for me.
I can do as much, and play
Feats as wondrous every day.
Scarcely can the sharpest sight
Track me in my rapid flight.
Up and down, and to and fro,
With a leap I come and go;
Now upon the ground, and now
Dancing on the topmost bough.
I am, like a running rill,
Never for a moment still.”

Slowly slackening his speed,
Thus replied the gallant Steed:—
“Say, my saucy rival, say,
Are the antics that you play,
Are your bounds from tree to tree,

Useful in the least degree?
In the course that I pursue
I've a worthier end in view.
If I task my powers and strain
Every nerve to scour the plain,
'Tis my duty, and I take
Pleasure, for my master's sake,
In each effort that I make,—
Confident that his regard
And approval will reward
All my toil, however hard."

Reader! look, and you may find
Scribblers of the Squirrel kind—
Busy triflers, who expend
Labour without aim or end,
And, with all their pains, produce
Nothing of the slightest use.

FABLE LVIII.

La perfeccion de una obra consiste en la union de lo útil y lo agradable.

THE GARDENER AND HIS MASTER.

IN the middle of a garden,
 Blooming with the fairest flowers,
Stood a fountain, ever playing
 Through the summer's sultry hours.

And a pond, that was replenish'd
 By the fountain's overflow,
And was amply stored with fishes,
 Slumber'd quietly below.

But the Gardener, attending
 Solely to his favourite plants,

Irrigated them so often,
And so much beyond their wants,

That in time the daily drainage
Nearly left the pond a-dry,
And at length, for lack of water,
All the fish were like to die.

As the owner of the garden
Through the walks one morning went,
And observed the loss resulting
From the man's mismanagement,

He reproved him gently for it,
Saying, "I am not more fond
Of the flower that decks my garden,
Than the fish that stocks my pond.

"For the one affords me pleasure,
When I'm in an idle mood;
And I find the other useful,
As an article of food."

From that day the simple fellow,
Who mistook his Master's wish,
Fearing, if he used the fountain,
That he should destroy the fish—

Left his plants without the moisture
Which they had enjoy'd before,
And, despite the drougthy weather,
Irrigated them no more.

But ere long the owner, seeing,
As again he sauntered there,
That the flowers were dead or dying
On the desolate parterre,

“Blockhead!” he exclaim'd, in anger,
“How you misapply your powers!
For at times you starve the fishes,
And at other times the flowers.

“Yet the fountain is so plenteous,
That its water, by my troth,

Might suffice, if rightly managed,
To preserve and feed them both."

Hence we may deduce a moral,
Which, though very old and trite,
Still deserves to be repeated
For the use of all who write—

That utility and pleasure
Should be kept alike in view,
And a volume, if instructive,
Should be entertaining too.

FABLE LIX.

No se han de apreciar los libros por su vulto, ne por su tamaño.

THE TWO THRUSHES.

A THRUSH, the sire of many a numerous brood,
 A bird whom length of years had render'd sage,
 Invited once, in a paternal mood,
 His youngest son, a chick of tender age,
 To bear him company, in quest of food,
 Unto a vineyard in the vicinage,
 Where fruit abounded, richer, riper still
 Than ever had regaled the youngster's bill.

"I fear me that this fruit is all a cheat,"
 The Thrushling pertly cried; "but lead the way,
 My worthy governor, and if the treat
 Be only half as tempting as you say,

I'll quickly show you how a cock can eat,

Who has not broke his fast since yesterday."

Impatient to enjoy the promised boon,

Away they flew, and reach'd the vineyard soon.

But when the youngster saw it, "Can it be,

That one who is so old and looks so wise,

Is partial to a fruit which seems to me

Contemptible alike in form and size?

But come, I'll show you in a trice," said he,

"A garden that contains a real prize—

A fruit which is, in point of bulk and shape,

A thousand times superior to the grape."

"I'll follow you," the elder Thrush replied,

"And taste the fruit which you commend so much,

Though I expect to find, when fairly tried,

A single grape-skin worth a hundred such."

"Well, here it is at last," the youngster cried;

"Admire it for a moment ere you touch—

The sight must surely strike you with surprise."

What was the fruit?—a gourd of monstrous size.

And thus—to end the fable, and extract

A moral from the tale that I have wrought—

Some readers and collectors seem to act

As foolishly by books, as if they thought

That any volume which is not, in fact,

Voluminous, is really good for nought.

A book is great, if it be good at all;

If it be bad, it cannot be too small.

FABLE LX.

Nadie crea saber tanto, que no tenga mas que aprender.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE SPARROW.

As once along the moonlight glade,
An organ, exquisitely play'd,
A strain of sweetest music sent,
A tuneful Nightingale essay'd
To imitate the instrument,
And emulously pour'd her throat,
To follow each delicious note;
When, seated in a neighbouring tree,
A chattering Sparrow pertly cried,
"I marvel much, my friend, to see
A famous chorister like thee
So destitute of proper pride,

As thus to take, with so much pains,
A lesson in the art of song
From one whose artificial strains
Are too monotonous and long—
From one who owes, in fact, to thee
His earliest knowledge of the art,
And still, if he will play, should be
Content to play a pupil's part."

"I have but little cause for pride,"
The humble Nightingale replied.
"If e'er the organ deign'd or deigns
To imitate my simple strains—
My wild untutor'd wood-notes—yet
How amply he repays the debt!
His measured music teaches me
The unerring laws of harmony,
And shows me how I may correct
By art each natural defect;
For, though in native powers of song
Superior to the vulgar throng,
And skill'd enough to please an ear

Unmusical as thine, my dear,
The most melodious Nightingale
May certainly improve his skill,
And learn to sing more sweetly still,
By studying the chromatic scale."

Thus every man of real learning
Is anxious to increase his lore,
And feels, in fact, a greater yearning,
The more he knows, to know the more.

FABLE LXI.

Quando se trabaja una obra entre muchos, cada uno quiere apropiársela
si es buena, y echa la culpa á los otros si es mala.

THE DISCONCERTED CONCERT.

LADIES and Gentlemen, please to walk in!
My guitar is well tuned—I'm about to begin;
And all that I crave,
In return for my stave—
For a fable so gay, with a moral so grave—
Are the smiles of the fair and the thanks of the
brave.

At the court of the Lion, the monarch of beasts,
His birth-day was kept as the greatest of feasts;
And, as it drew near,
It happen'd, one year,

That, wishing to pay
Their respects in a way
Befitting a day
So deservedly dear,

His courtiers agreed, if they only could sing,
That a concert, concluding with "God save the
King,"

Or some similar anthem, would just be the thing.

Proceeding at once, with more hurry than skill,
To distribute the parts which each member should
fill,

They pass'd by the nightingale, linnet, and lark,
The canary and thrush, as not up to the mark,

And made a selection,

On simple inspection,

Of vocalists scarcely as free from objection—

An incompetent set,

But so confident yet

Of their powers, that in solo, or glee, or duet,

Each vow'd that his own

Execution alone

For any defects in the rest would atone,

And that, if he would

But try it, he could

Perform any part in the programme aright,

And sing the most difficult passage at sight.

In fact, the most noteless and tuneless of beasts

Were selected to make up the troop of *artistes*.

The trebles in chief were a Cricket and Frog,

And their principal tenors an Owl and a Dog ;

Their best baritone

Was an elderly Drone,

And the bass was assigned to an Ass and a Hog.

I need not describe what an uproar arose,

When the concert began, with such singers as those.

Suffice it to say, that the bawling and squalling,

And shrieking and squeaking, were really appalling ;

That, instead of applause

And the clapping of paws,

There were shruggings of shoulders and "pishes"

and "pshaws,"

And that but for the presence of royalty, all
The beasts would have risen and quitted the hall.

The Frog, who was much disconcerted to see
What a failure the concert was likely to be,
And, as *prima donna*, felt sorely afraid
That the blame of its failure on her would be laid,
Resolved, by attacking her asinine brother,
To shift it at once from herself to another.

“The Ass, though it grieves me,” said she, “to
impugn

The taste of a neighbour, is much out of tune;

For, though he appears

Well furnish’d with ears,

The creature makes so bad a use of them, that
He cannot distinguish a sharp from a flat.”—

Amazed and indignant at such an assault,

The Ass replied: “Ah, no!

It is the *soprano*,

The ear-piercing Cricket, whose voice is in fault,
And spoils all our songs by its screamings in *alt*.”—

“Nay, nay,” squall’d the Cricket, “I have not a doubt

That, in trying to sing with a ring in his snout,
The Hog is the party who puts us all out.”—

“Despite of your sneer, and despite of the ring in
My nose,” cried the Hog, “if there’s any one thing in
Which I excel, it is certainly singing;

But I can’t say as much for the Dog, and his yelp
Is a positive hindrance, instead of a help.”—

“We should do very well,” quoth the Dog with a
growl,

“Were it not for the hideous hoot of the Owl.”—

“The Dog,” cried the bird of Minerva, “ah, well-
a-day!

Has a very indifferent notion of melody!

A more musical brute

Would allow that my hoot

Is as soft and as sweet as an amorist’s lute;

But the Drone,

I must own,

Is as harsh in its tone

As a rustical bagpipe and ought to be mute.”—

Here the Lion arose, and cut short the dispute:

“Is this hubbub,” quoth he, “is this halliballoo,

So distasteful to me and disgraceful to you,
The best that such boastful performers can do?
Ere yet it came off, every singer agreed,
That, perfect in all points and sure to succeed,
The concert would prove a crack concert indeed;
But now, when it turns out at best but a bore,
And fails to elicit a single *encore*,
Each seeks to disown any share in the thing,
And thinks by this dodge to bamboozle his king.
But I'm not to be done; and I tell you, egad,
That your singing and conduct are equally bad,
And you are, one and all, a contemptible squad—
You had better get out of my sight—so you
had”—

And it was not in joke
That his majesty spoke,
For he look'd, good lack,
As awfully black

As if he intended an instant attack,
And he flourish'd his tail
On high, like a flail

About to come down with a terrible thwack,

“Be off in a crack,

And never come back,

For, zounds, if I catch you again in this hall,
I’ll silence your singing and throttle you all.”

Thus it happens, when several authors unite
In a work to which each one contributes his mite,
That, if it succeed, every writer is prone
To arrogate all the success as his own,
As due to his talents and labours alone ;
While, if it should fail, he is sure to condemn
His colleagues, and wholly attribute to them
A result which his own share of dulness, no doubt,
Has equally aided in bringing about.

Such scribblers, as thoroughly stupid and vain
As the blundering brutes who suggested my strain,

Deserve that a similar fate should befall them ;
That if not a lion, a critic at least—

Perhaps of the two the more truculent beast—

Should rise in his anger and savagely maul them.

FABLE LXII.

Non ha de considerarse en un autor la edad sinó el talento.

THE COCK AND HIS COMBATS.

A FULL-GROWN Cock, who thought himself a game
cock,

But still in all his quarrels proved a tame cock—
For he was quarrelsome, confirming fully
The axiom that a coward is a bully—

One day, I know not why,
Attack'd a Cockerel who was passing by,
Perhaps he deem'd

That one who seem'd

In stature a mere chicken, might

Be chicken-hearted in a fight—

If so he deem'd, he did not deem aright.

A mighty mind
Within a little body may be shrined;
And in the combat that arose,
(For, after some preliminary crows,
They naturally came to blows,)
The lesser bird exhibited a vigour
That utterly discomfited the bigger,
And brought the quarrel to a speedy close.
Retreating from a foe who hit so hard,
The vanquish'd Sultan of the yard
Exclaim'd unto the inmates of his harem :
"That Cockerel, who is making such a rout,
In time will grow into a cock, no doubt,
And, when he gets his spurs, may even be
A champion, worthy to contend with me ;
At present he's a chicken, and I spare him."

But, though the craven prudently forbore
To meddle with the Cockerel from that day,
Ere long, becoming cook-a-hoop once more,

He got into another fray,

And, though

On this occasion with an aged foe,
Proved just as unsuccessful as before.

The bird, in fact,
Whom he attack'd

Was old enough to be his sire,
But, having been a warrior in his prime,
Retain'd, despite the influence of time,

A portion of his former fire—
For fire beneath the frost of age may glow,
As smoulders a volcano under snow.
In short, with crippled wing and bloody crest,
Again our bully came off second-best,
And, staggering from the spot, again address'd
The sympathising inmates of his harem :

“That Cock,” he cried, “who seems so bold,
My dears, is very weak and old;
And so I pity the poor wretch, and spare him.”

Let authors, ere they venture to engage
In controversy, to this truth attend—
That on their rival's skill, and not his age,
The issue of the contest must depend.

FABLE LXIII.

Es igualmente injusta la preocupacion exclusiva á favor de la Literatura antigua, ó á favor de la moderna.

THE GNATS.

A SWARM of Gnats, one sultry day,
 Into a wine-vault made their way,
 And having sipp'd from every can
 And cask within their reach, began,
 As toppers often do, to bicker
 Upon the merits of their liquor.
 N.B.—I wonder that a scribe
 Who wrote so much about the tribe,
 Good Villaviciosa, when
 Their history employed his pen,
 Omitted in his book to say
 One syllable about the fray;

But I'll describe it, and enable
The author by my present fable—
A fable which is just as true
As the preceding sixty-two—
To fill up, in the next edition
Of his *Mosquée*, this omission.

The quarrel of the Gnats began
With certain elders of the clan,
Who, dipping their probosces in
The produce of the nearest binn,
And finding it extremely thin,
Insisted that no modern wine
Was half so generous and fine,
Had half the flavour, strength, and zest,
Which wines of former times possess'd.

The younger members of the swarm,
In terms as positive and warm,
Preferr'd the new, and vow'd that never age
Could have produced as good a beverage
As that which they imbibed at present

And found so potent and so pleasant.
With all that flippancy of tongue,
Which marks the speeches of the young,
They begg'd the others to dismiss
The venerable prejudice
Which makes an elder ever blind
To modern merits, and inclined
Almost to worship, in his dotage,
The very faults of a remote age.

The more they talk'd, the greater grew
The disagreement of the crew,
Until the wine-vault with the clang
Of the contending parties rang;
When, luckily, there interfered
A speaker whom they all revered—
A Gnat, an old experienced drinker,
And yet no ordinary thinker,
In short, a native of Navarre,
And shrewd, as all its natives are.
“By Bacchus! cease your din,” quoth he,
“And listen for awhile to me;

For, in a quarrel of the kind,
What better umpire can you find
Than one familiar with the use
Of every grape's peculiar juice?
Where'er the best of wine that's made is,
Peralta, Malaga, or Cadiz,
Oporto, Malta, or elsewhere,
I've sought it out, and sipp'd it there.
Know, then—for I will mention some
Of the results to which I've come—
That, as no mere amount of age
Can turn a fool into a sage,*
So, in the article of drink,
'Tis equally absurd to think
That bad wine may be turn'd to good
By being kept for years in wood.
Though, if originally prime,
It may, I grant, improve with time;
Yet, if of an inferior vintage,
With little or no body in't, age,

* The proverb that "Experience makes fools wise," is, literally taken, a very absurd one. Fools are a class who never profit by experience.

Instead of helping to correct,
Will aggravate each old defect,
And make, with every passing hour,
The thin ^{thin} sour stuff more thin and sour.
In former times, too—let me add—
The wines were, now and then, as bad
As any that we've lately had;
And when the crop, from blight or hail
Or other cause, had chanced to fail,
Their grapes, like ours, though duly press'd,
Produced mere vinegar at best.
In candour, too, I must allow
That vintages are gather'd now,
That may in point of worth compare
With former growths however rare;
And possibly, if kept awhile,
This very wine which we revile,
Hereafter may be deem'd delicious—
For taste and fashion are capricious,
And, much as we dislike its flavour, it
May prove with future gnats a favourite.
In fine—to terminate the lecture,

And put my meaning past conjecture—
One short and simple rule is mine,
To regulate my choice of wine;
For, making quality my test,
I scorn the bad and drink the best,
Nor, if the flavour pleases me,
Am curious what its age may be.”

When critics angrily discuss
The Ancients and the Moderns thus,
I deem the question which they raise
Of who deserve the greater praise,
As vain and frivolous as that
Which was submitted to the Gnat.
My verdict, too, like his shall be;
For, so a volume pleases me,
I care not if its author wrote
In recent times or times remote.

FABLE LXIV.

No basta que sea buena la materia de un escrito ; es menester que tambien lo sea el modo de tratarla.

THE LACE-MAKERS.

IN the same village dwelt a brace of neighbours,
 A man and woman,—an industrious brace,
 Engaged from morn till night in kindred labours,
 For both were manufacturers of lace ;
 But his from gold and hers from flax was made,
 And yet the woman's was the better trade.

“’Tis strange,” exclaim’d the man, “that our galoons
 Should differ so in value, and that thine
 Should fetch in any market more doubloons
 Than twice an equal quantity of mine,
 While mine, as all may feel, are sterling stuff,
 And thine too flimsy to withstand a puff.”

“The different price, dear sir, at which we sell

Our different fabrics may be shortly told,”

The dame replied; “for, though I know full well

That mine is wrought in thread and yours in gold,

The preference of the former to the latter

Is but a proof that Art surpasses Matter.”

Let authors study to improve their style—

For as the thread from which the costliest lace
Is fashion'd, is comparatively vile,

And owes to art alone its worth and grace,
The veriest trifle, if express'd with ease
And elegance of style, is sure to please.

FABLE LXV.

Quando se trata de notar los defectos de una obra, no deben censurarse
los personales de su Autor.

THE PEACOCK AND THE CROW.

UPON a time, as legends show,
And legends seldom lie,
A Peacock quarrell'd with a Crow,
And challenged him to fly.

The challenger was much to blame;
For none who know the brace,
Would find it difficult to name
The winner of the race.

But as the Crow prepared to start,
Impatient for the skies,

The Peacock hoarsely cried: "Thou art
The vilest bird that flies.

"Thy coat, as black as any pall,
Is ominous of woe—
Ill-luck is certain to befall
The man who meets a Crow.

"And carrion, filthy carrion, is
Thy chief and favourite fare—
I'm sure so foul a fare as this
No other fowl would share."

"I have, no doubt, my faults," replied
The Crow, "but let them rest;
The only question to be tried
Is who can fly the best."

And thus an author's person, when
His works are free from fault,
Is often to the critic's pen
An object of assault.

FABLE LXVI.

La costumbre inveterada no debe autorizar lo que la razon condena.

THE JUDGE AND THE BRIGAND.

A BRIGAND, who had brutally attack'd
 A traveller, was taken in the fact,
 And led to instant trial; when, in place
 Of disavowing the atrocious act,
 He justified it to his judge's face—
 "'Tis hard," said he, "that I should be arraign'd
 For following my proper occupation—
 The only trade to which my youth was train'd
 By those who undertook my education.
 For in my childhood I was taught to steal,
 And show'd in the performance of my duty,
 Or what I deem'd my duty, such a zeal
 As brought me for the time both praise and booty;

Till growing conscious, as I grew more big,
That petty larceny was *infra dig.*,
I left it, and to gain my daily bread,
Assumed the burglar's manlier part instead.
But latterly, and since I reach'd my prime,
My course has been upon the king's high-way,
And if, from custom and the lapse of time,
I have become, as I am proud to say,
The most distinguish'd cut-throat of my day,
I think it hard that you should interfere,
And seriously impute it as a crime,
That I pursue my natural career—
The same that I've pursued through many a year."

Some scribblers make a similar excuse,
And if they are impeach'd for an offence
Against the laws of decency or sense,
Appeal to precedents, and plead that use
And long prescription sanction the abuse.

FABLE LXVII.

No confundamos la buena critica con la mala.

THE VIPER AND THE LEECH.

A VIPER, once endow'd with speech,
Address'd himself unto a Leech:—

“We bite alike, but man requites
How very differently our bites!
He cheerfully submits to thine,
But terror-stricken flies from mine.”

“The reason of his acting thus,”

Replied the Leech, “is obvious,

My bite is, like the lancet's prick,

A wholesome wound that cures the sick;

While every puncture of *thy* fang
Inflicts a deep and deadly pang."

I thank thee, reader, that thou hast
Perused my fables to the last;
And if thou wilt not praise the same,
But rather art disposed to blame,
Then censure me, as Leeches bite,
In mercy, reader, not in spite.

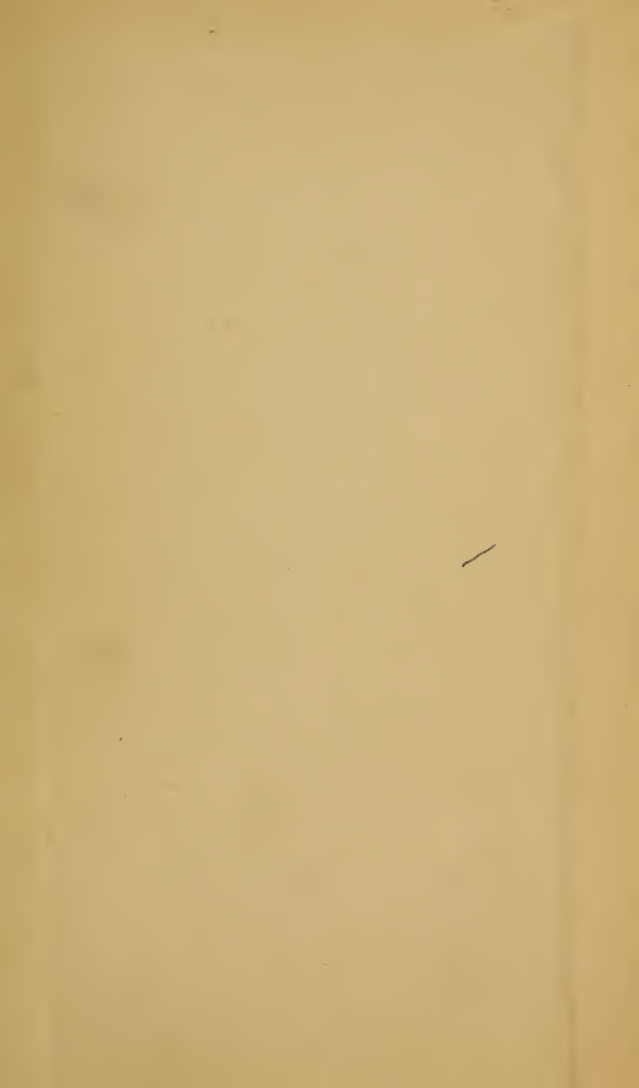
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